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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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# 10 or 15%: Uncertainty looms over US tariffs on India

## 10% tariffs come into effect today but US had raised it to 15%

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

Uncertainty prevails as a 10 per cent US tariff on Indian goods are set to come into effect on Tuesday for 150 days, days after the US Supreme Court strike down President Donald Trump's sweeping global levies.

On 21 February, Trump imposed a 10 per cent tariff on all countries, including India, effective from 24 February, after the court ruled that his earlier measures under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977 were illegal. However, a few hours later, Trump announced the rate would be raised to 15 per cent, though no formal notification has yet been issued. Indian exporters are now in a quandary over whether the applicable tariff is 10 per cent or 15 per cent.

Washington had imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff on India in August 2025 and an additional 25 per cent penalty over purchases of Russian crude, taking total duties to 50 per cent. The punitive 25 per cent has since been withdrawn, leaving 25 per cent in place. Under a proposed interim trade framework, tariffs could fall to 18 per cent, subject to a legal agreement. Trade talks in Washington scheduled for 23–26 February have been postponed. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal earlier indicated a deal could take effect in April.

**CARNEY TO VISIT INDIA**

Mark Carney will travel to India on 26 February to expand ties and pursue a trade deal, focusing on defence, energy and AI. He will visit Mumbai and New Delhi, where he will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India IS Canada's seventh-largest trading partner, with two-way trade at USD 30.8 billion. Relations had soured after former prime minister Justin Trudeau alleged an Indian link to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a claim India rejected. Diplomatic ties are now being reset. —*PTI*

## INDIA ASKS ITS NATIONALS TO LEAVE IRAN IMMEDIATELY

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

India on Monday advised all its nationals residing in Iran to leave the country by all available means of transport, including commercial flights, in view of the evolving security situation.

The Indian embassy in Iran issued a fresh advisory to the Indian nationals amid fresh protests in Tehran and increasing fears of US military strikes on the Gulf nation. Students at several universities in Iran held anti-government demonstrations in a first such agitation since Tehran's brutal crackdown on the protesters last month.

According to official estimates in January, little over 10,000 Indians, including students, were living in Iran.

"In continuation of the advisory issued by the government of India on January 5 and in The mission also reiterated that all Indian citizens and PIOs (persons of Indian-origin) should exercise due caution, avoid areas of protests or demonstrations and stay in contact with the Indian Embassy. —*PTI*

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## Under construction bridge caves in on NH in MP

**BHOPAL, 23 FEB**

A portion of the Jabalpur-Bhopal road leading to a rail-overbridge (ROB) on National Highway-45 has caved in during maintenance work in Jabalpur district, disrupting traffic on the route. It was built at a cost of Rs Rs 400 crore. No casualty was reported in the incident which occurred on 22 February. Traffic on the road was totally stopped and diverted to alternate routes. TState PWD Minister Rakesh Singh said the contractor has been blacklisted and an FIR would be lodged him.—*PTI*

## Unjust to disregard housewives' labour: Delhi HC

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

Dispelling the "myth" of an "idle wife", the Delhi High Court has said that a homemaker's labour enables the earning spouse to function effectively, and it was "unjust" to disregard her contributions while deciding maintenance. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma observed that a wife's non-employment cannot be equated with idleness or deliberate dependence. —*PTI*

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## Former railway minister Mukul Roy dies at 71

**KOLKATA, 23 FEB**

Mukul Roy, once considered Mamata Banerjee's most trusted aide and TMC's chief strategist, died of a cardiac arrest at a private Salt Lake hospital. He was 71 and survived by his son, Subhranshu Roy. Roy had been suffering from multiple ailments, including dementia, and had recently fallen into a coma, according to family sources. His political career spanned four decades, beginning with the Youth Congress before joining Banerjee in 1998 to help establish the TMC.—*PTI*

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## Delhi Police arrest 7 over shirtless AI summit protest

**GWALIOR, 23 FEB**

Delhi Police have arrested seven individuals, including three from Gwalior, linked to the shirtless protest by Indian Youth Congress workers during the AI Impact Summit. The protest, which occurred last week, involved slogans on T-shirts against the government and the India-US trade deal. Police added charges of promoting enmity and assertions harmful to national integration. Arrested are Jitendra Yadav, Raj Gujjar, and Ajay Kumar; detained are UP's Ritik Shukla.—*PTI*

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## 4 die due to adulterated milk in Andhra

**RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM, 23 FEB**

Four people have died in the last 48 hours after allegedly consuming adulterated milk supplied by an unauthorised vendor in East Godavari district.

Expressing grief over the deaths, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced a compensation of Rs 10 lakh each to the families of the victims.

After consuming the "contaminated" milk, two persons died on 22 February, while two others died on Monday. 12 more people were hospitalised.

The government will bear the entire medical expenditure of those undergoing treatment.

As per preliminary investigation, the contaminated milk caused kidney (renal) failure, leading to sudden urinary blockage and death.

East Godavari district collector Kirthi Chekuri said special response teams are conducting door-to-door surveys and providing medical assistance to people in affected areas.

A local milk vendor was taken into custody.

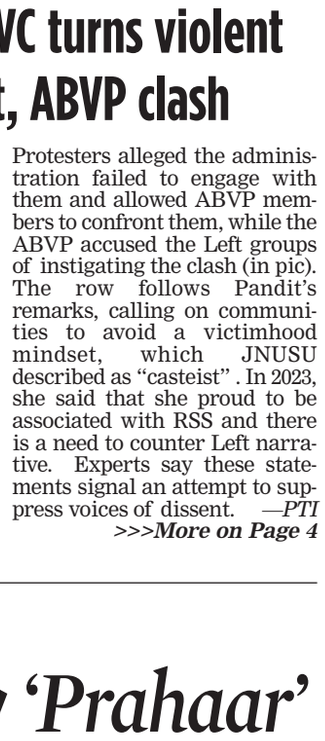
Blood tests are being conducted in 106 households where the vendor has supplied milk, and samples were collected from 73 families.

Meanwhile, the animal husbandry department tested 46 cattle and sent samples to scientific and veterinary laboratories, while Food Safety officials sent milk and curd samples to laboratories in Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam.

East Godavari district Superintendent of Police (SP) D Narasimha Kishore said post-mortem reports are awaited and the unauthorised dairy unit has been seized.

Kishore said children and elderly persons appear to be more affected and advised the public to consume only properly boiled milk for the next few days.

The government is conducting an inquiry and assured strict action against those responsible for the tragic deaths and hospitalisations. —*PTI*



A woman shows milk in containers, in Godavari, Andhra Pradesh, on Monday —*PTI*

**'WILL REVEAL NAMES'**

## 30% of elected leaders are corrupt: K'taka contractor leader

**CHITRADURGA, 23 FEB**

R Manjunath, President of the Karnataka Contractors Association, has alleged that 30 per cent of the state's elected representatives are corrupt. He stated he is willing to provide a list of names if Chief Minister Siddaramaiah requests it. Speaking at a press conference, Manjunath highlighted a pending amount of Rs 37,000 crore owed to contractors across the state and demanded its immediate release.

He criticised the Chief Minister for failing to resolve the payment issue despite multiple meetings, saying, "There is a pending amount of Rs 37,000 crore of contractors across the state. Siddaramaiah should not say that the previous government did it. The government means everyone is responsible. The CM should release the pending money. The CM has already held many meetings. But to no avail."

Manjunath announced a protest involving 35,000 contractors and their families at Freedom Park on 6 March, citing frustration over delays in Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) work and urging the government to coordinate with the Centre to release funds. He warned of a major agitation if demands were not met, amidst ongoing debates over corruption and governance in Karnataka politics. —*PTI*

## 'Boyfriend', friend spike drink, rape 19-year-old Bengaluru

**BENGALURU, 23 FEB**

The Bengaluru police have registered a case of gangrape against the reported boyfriend and friend of a 19-year-old student for spiking her drink and sexually assaulting her.

The incident occurred at a private villa in Jakkur on 14 February, where her boyfriend had invited her to celebrate Valentine's Day. On that day after attending college, she had gone out for dinner with a friend. Later she arrived at the villa, where her boyfriend's friends also joined in the celebrations.

In her complaint, the survivor, a first-year degree student in a private college, said that she was offered a drink suspected to have been laced with intoxicating red pills.

She felt disoriented and dizzy soon after drinking it. Taking advantage of the situation, her boyfriend and his friend sexually assaulted her.

She also claimed that the duo locked her inside the room and later dropped her near a mall. They threatened her with dire consequences if she disclosed the incident to anyone.

Meanwhile, the accused filed a counter complaint that the girl, along with a male acquaintance, wanted to extort Rs 10 lakh from them by making false allegations.

The accused alleged said that the charges were fabricated as the girl required money to fund her father's cancer treatment.

They also claimed that she had befriended them through Instagram a month ago and gradually became close.

The two had met a few times at a café in Koramangala and were in regular contact. A probe in underway and the police are trying to verify the statements of both parties. —*Agencies/ PTI*

## Protest against VC turns violent in JNU as Left, ABVP clash

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

Several students were injured in a late-night clash between rival groups at Jawaharlal Nehru University, with Left-backed and Right-wing factions blaming each other for the violence.

Tensions escalated around 1.30 am on Monday during a protest called by the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU), termed the 'Samta Juloos' (Equality March), demanding the resignation of Vice-Chancellor Shantishree Dhulipudi Pandit. Protesters alleged the administration failed to engage with them and allowed ABVP members to confront them, while the ABVP accused the Left groups of instigating the clash (in pic). The row follows Pandit's remarks, calling on communities to avoid a victimhood mindset, which JNUSU described as "casteist" . In 2023, she said that she proud to be associated with RSS and there is a need to counter Left narrative. Experts say these statements signal an attempt to suppress voices of dissent. —*PTI*

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## Mexico's most wanted drug lord killed in military operation

**JALISCO, 23 FEB**

Mexico's most powerful cartel leader, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, known as "El Mencho", has been killed in a military operation in the western state of Jalisco, sparking a wave of violence across the country.

Oseguera, head of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), was wounded in a shoot-out with Mexican forces in Tapalpa, near Guadalajara, on Sunday and died while being flown to Mexico City. Troops came under heavy fire during the operation. Four people were killed at the scene, while three others — including Oseguera — later died of their injuries.

Security Secretary Omar Garcia Harfuch said around 30 suspects were killed in Jalisco and four more in Michoacan. In retaliatory attacks, 25 National Guard members were killed in six incidents in Jalisco. A prison guard, a state prosecutor's agent and a woman also died.

The White House said the United States provided intelligence support. The US had offered a $15m reward for his capture, and in February 2025 the CJNG was designated a foreign terrorist organisation by President Donald Trump.

**INDIA ISSUES ADVISORY**

The Embassy of India, Mexico City urged Indians in Jalisco, Tamaulipas, Michoacan, Guerrero and Nuevo León to remain indoors, avoid crowds and follow local authorities' advice. —*PTI*

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**TO STOP EXTREMIST VIOLENCE**

## *India gets its 1st anti-terror policy 'Prahaar'*

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

The government on Monday unveiled the country's first counter-terrorism policy, "Prahaar", setting out a multi-layered strategy based on "zero tolerance", intelligence-led prevention and disruption of extremist violence.

The policy unveiled by the home ministry is based on seven key pillars to counter the terror threats emanating from India or abroad -- prevention, responses, aggregating internal capacities, human rights and "Rule of Law"-based processes, attenuating the conditions enabling terrorism including radicalisation, aligning and shaping the international efforts to counter terrorism and recovery and resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

"There has been a history of sporadic instability in the immediate neighbourhood of India, which has often given rise to ungoverned spaces.....," the document said, without naming Pakistan.

India has consistently stood by the victims of terrorism and has been steadfast in its belief that there can be no justification whatsoever for violence in the world, it said.

Operating from foreign soil, terrorists have hatched conspiracies to promote violence in India, with handlers using latest technologies to facilitate terror-related activities and attacks in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

Technological evolution offers terrorists a cloak of invisibility, making it difficult to penetrate their nefarious scheming or track their funds.

Close partnerships have been established between central agencies and state police forces through the Multi-Agency Centre and the Joint Task Force on Intelligence in the Intelligence Bureau.

Issues of poverty and unemployment among vulnerable communities are addressed through various government schemes and initiatives to prevent inimical elements from misusing these conditions, the policy stated.

International cooperation resulted in the disruption and indictment of many terrorist and radical entities. —*PTI*

**MANIPURI FILM 'BOONG' WINS BAFTA**

India had plenty to cheer at the BAFTA Awards in London as Manipuri coming-of-age film 'Boong' scooped Best Children's & Family Film. The tale of a boy searching for his absent dad to surprise his mom charmed audiences. Director Lakshmipriya Devi used the spotlight to pray for peace in Manipur. Veteran star Dharmendra was also honoured.

'Boong' producers Alan McAlex, Farhan Akhtar & Ritesh Sidhwani with director Lakshmipriya Devi pose with the award at the 79th British Academy Film Awards in London

**BIG WINNER**

**'One Battle After Another' wins 6 awards:** Best Film; Best Director (Paul Thomas Anderson); Adapted Screenplay; Editing; Cinematography; Supporting Actor: Sean Penn

**OTHER WINNERS**

Lead Actress: **Jessie Buckley ('Hamnet')**
Lead Actor: **Robert Aramayo ('I Swear')**

— PTI

## State is not giving land for Central schemes: Yaduveer

**MYSURU, 23 FEB**

Mysuru MP Yaduveer Wadiyar on Monday criticised the state government for transferring five acres of land in T Narasipura for a stadium, while refusing land for central government projects like HMT Industries. He stressed that the forested site, home to over 500 trees, many centuries old, must be conserved amid climate concerns. Yaduveer urged the administration to restore the land and find an alternative site for the stadium. He also accused the state of neglecting tobacco growers and blamed internal power struggles for delaying development works, instead of blaming the Union government.

*—Salar News*

Top Cop MA Saleem unveiled the route map and T-shirts for the 3rd Karnataka State Police Run at a curtain-raiser event. The run is scheduled for 1 March

*—MOHAMMED ASAD*

# 1st time Cong MLAs seek Cabinet berths ahead of reshuffle

## 38 MLAs write to Rahul, Kharge and CM

**BENGALURU/MYSURU, 23 FEB**

A group of first-time Congress MLAs have written to senior party leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, seeking representation in the State Cabinet during the proposed reshuffle.

In a joint letter addressed to the High Command and State leadership, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his Deputy DK Shivakumar, the legislators urged that at least five first-time MLAs be inducted as ministers. "The people of Karnataka have elected 38 members to the Assembly for the first time and want to see new, young faces in the Legislature," the letter stated. The MLAs noted that when the 34-member ministry was formed under Siddaramaiah, no first-time MLA received a Cabinet berth. They argued that a mix of youth and experience would strengthen governance and help the party return to power in 2028.

Meanwhile, the debate over a Dalit Chief Minister intensified. Senior Vokkaliga minister K Venkatesh asserted that the Chief Miniter post is not vacant, defending Siddaramaiah's leadership amid calls from social welfare minister HC Mahadevappa to elevate a Dalit leader. Venkatesh, who migrated to Congress with Mahadevappa in the early 2000s, said the post may in future go to Dalit, Lingayat, Vokkaliga, or Kuruba leaders, but Siddaramaiah remains the chief minister.

State Home Minister G Parameshwara accused the opposition of "unnecessarily stoking" the Dalit CM debate to deflect from governance issues. "This is the work of the opposition. The administration is running smoothly, and only Congress has the history and political will to elevate a Dalit leader to the top post," said Parameshwara. He said that detailed budget discussions and routine governance have continued normally over the past fortnight. *—Salar News*

In a letter to the Congress High Command, the MLAs urged that at least five first time MLAs must be inducted as Ministers *—PTI*

Amazon employees during the inauguration of the company's office in Bengaluru on Monday—*PTI*

## Bengaluru gets Amazon's new office

**BENGALURU, 23 JAN**

Minister for Large and Medium Industries, MB Patil, on Monday inaugurated Amazon's newly constructed 11 lakh sqft corporate office near Yelahanka, Bengaluru. Built on a five-acre site around 15 km from Kempegowda International Airport, the 12-storey campus is Amazon's second largest office in Asia and will support over 7,000 employees across e-commerce, operations, payments, technology, and seller services.

"This is Amazon's 10th corporate office in Karnataka. The company plans to invest USD 35 billion in India over the next four years, supporting 15 million small businesses and generating lakhs of jobs," Patil said. He highlighted Karnataka's strong economic credentials, noting a per capita income of over Rs 3.8 lakh, the second-highest GST contributions nationally at Rs 1.6 lakh crore, and Bengaluru's ranking as the 21st most innovative city globally. Patil cited the state's robust infrastructure for e-commerce, with 42.48 lakh tonnes of warehousing capacity. *—PTI*

**HATE POLITICS**

# Congress targeting Banjaras: BJP Chief

**BENGALURU, 23 FEB**

BJP President BY Vijayendra on Monday accused the Congress of "engaging in the politics of hate" against the Banjara community after the arrest of party MLA Chandru Lamani by the Lokayukta police for "taking a bribe" from a contractor.

Vijayendra said the party would face the Lokayukta case involving its MLA legally.

Responding to questions about Chandru Lamani's arrest, Vijayendra said he had followed the developments through the media but alleged that the issue was being viewed in a larger political context.

Vijayendra claimed that since Siddaramaiah assumed office, the Banjara community had been targeted.

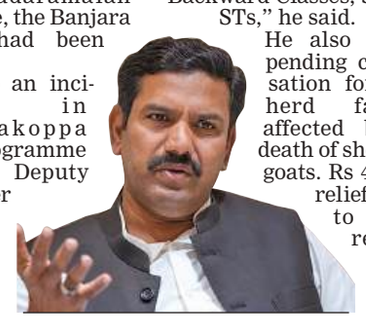
Referring to an incident in Surgundanakoppa during a programme attended by Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, he alleged that Banjara youth who raised their demands were booked.

On the Chandru Lamani case, he said the matter was under investigation and before court, and the party would not interfere.

Vijayendra questioned the Congress' moral authority to speak on corruption, citing the alleged Valmiki Development Corporation scam. He said Congress leaders have no right to lecture the BJP on probity.

Vijayendra also appealed to the Chief Minister to allocate more funds to Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

"At least in this budget, allocate a minimum of Rs 2,500 crore to 3,000 crore to Backward Classes, SCs and STs," he said.



He also flagged pending compensation for shepherd families affected by the death of sheep and goats. Rs 45 crore relief is yet to be released in the state. *— PTI*

## BJP MEETS GUV OVER INTERNAL QUOTA

**BENGALURU, 23 FEB**

A BJP delegation on Monday met Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot over the Scheduled Caste internal reservation issue and sought his intervention.

In a memorandum submitted to the Governor, the party accused the state government of failing to implement the Supreme Court's 1 August 2024 verdict on internal reservation even after 18 months, while other states had acted within six months.

"Eighteen months have gone after the SC gave its verdict on the SC internal reservation issue," the delegation said in its letter, adding that Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, as well as Haryana, have already implemented the judgment.

The BJP contended that the constitution of the Justice Nagamohan Das Commission was unnecessary as the government already has data from the Justice Sadashiva Commission and the Madhuswamy Committee.

It alleged that the Congress government adopted "delay tactics" by setting up a panel that functioned for six months at a cost of Rs 110 crore. *—PTI*

## BioEconomy of K'taka touches $39.2B: Report

**BENGALURU, 23 FEB**

Karnataka's BioEconomy has touched USD 39.2 billion in 2025, indicating strong growth in previous years and reaffirming the state's leadership position nationally, according to an official report released on Monday.

The Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society (KITS), under the Department of Electronics, IT, Biotechnology and Science & Technology, unveiled the Karnataka BioEconomy Report 2025 in collaboration with the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises.

The report that was released by IT Minister Priyank Kharge stated that the state contributes around 21 per cent of India's BioEconomy and accounts for over 10 per cent of Karnataka's GSDP.

The report said the BioEconomy expanded from USD 31.0 billion in 2023, reflecting 26.5 per cent cumulative growth, and is now adding nearly USD 10 billion every quarter to the state's GDP.

BioPharma remains the anchor with over 40 per cent share (about USD 16.44 billion), driven by biologics, biosimilars, vaccines and diagnostics, it said.

"BioIndustrial biotechnology has emerged as the fastest-growing segment (about USD 11.46 billion, around 29 per cent share), led by fermentation-based industries, biofuels, enzymes and sustainable materials," the report stated.

BioServices accounts for around 25.8 per cent, while BioAgri contributes to sustainable agriculture and input innovation, it added. *— PTI*

# HAL downplays 'minor' Tejas aircraft crash

**BENGALURU, 23 FEB**

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Monday dismissed reports over a crash involving the LCA Tejas aircraft, stating the incident was limited to a minor technical issue on the ground and there was no airborne accident.

In a filing with the stock exchange, HAL said, "HAL acknowledges the recent media reports on the LCA Tejas incident and wishes to provide factual clarification. There has been no reported crash of the LCA Tejas. The event in question was a minor technical incident on the ground.

LCA Tejas maintains one of the world's best safety records among contemporary fighter aircraft. As a standard operating procedure, the issue is being analysed in depth, and HAL is working closely with the Indian Air Force (IAF) for a speedy resolution."

Earlier, on 13 February, informing about the progress of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mark 1A programme,

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan during a visit to the HAL headquarters in Bengaluru *—PTI*

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said that five engines are currently available and five aircraft are already flying.

Speaking to ANI, he said production has largely stabilised for Indian vendors and HAL, and will improve further once engine supply stabilises. He asserted that while weapon trials have been successful, some of the Indian Air Force's requirements have not yet been fully met. He added with a planned order of 180 aircraft, the system is expected to be refined over time to meet the Air Force's full needs. —ANI

## ACTOR RANVEER SINGH MOVES HC TO QUASH FIR IN KANTARA MIMICRY ROW

**BENGALURU, 23 FEB**

Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh has moved the Karnataka High Court challenging the FIR and quashing of a criminal case registered against him over alleged insult to a 'deity' while mimicking 'Kantara Chapter-1' film.

The controversy relates to remarks allegedly made by the actor at the Filmfare Awards event in Goa while speaking about the film 'Kantara'.

He is accused of imitating a Daiva and calling it 'devil'.

Based on a complaint lodged by advocate Prashanth, an FIR was registered at the High Grounds police station. Police had earlier issued

notices to Singh in connection with the case.

As there was no response from the actor, the High Grounds police recently initiated steps to proceed with further legal action, police sources said.

The case is listed for hearing before the bench of Justice M Nagaprasanna in the high court on 24 February. *—PTI*

# Will fight till MNREGA is restored, says CM

**CHIKKABALLAPUR, 23 FEB**

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah accused the BJP-led Centre of dismantling MGNREGA and vowed a stir until it is restored.

Addressing the 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangraam' rally here on Monday, he said the Congress would fight against the replacement of the rural jobs scheme with a new Central law.

"Today the 'Save MGNREGA' campaign has been launched across the country. It has begun in Karnataka as well," Siddaramaiah said pointing out that the Centre had scrapped MGNREGA and had enacted the Vikasit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar Ajeevika Mission–Grameen (VBG-RAMG) Act in its place.

CM Siddaramaiah, Dy CM DK Shivakumar and Randeep Singh Surjewala, participate in a protest rally against VB G Ram G at Chikkaballapur *—PTI*

There was no justification to repeal the scheme, he said, recalling that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was enacted in 2005 when Dr Manmohan Singh was Prime Minister to provide employment to rural labourers, Adivasis, small farmers and women.

Siddaramaiah alleged that the new law was pushed through Parliament without adequate debate.

"On 17 December 2025 there were only eight hours of debate. On 18 December, the Bill was passed and the VBG-RAMG Act came into force," he said.

He claimed that nearly 12 crore workers were affected by the scrapping of MGNREGA, of whom about 53 per cent were women and 28 per cent belonged to SCs and STs. The scheme was named after Mahatma Gandhi as he believed in developing villages of the country. *— PTI*

# Bandh in Chikkamagaluru over elephant attacks

**CHIKKAMAGALURU/ BENGALURU, 23 FEB**

Residents of Koppa, NR Pura, and Sringeri taluks in Chikkamagaluru observed a peaceful bandh on Monday, protesting against the alleged inaction of the Karnataka Forest Department and Police in preventing ongoing wild elephant attacks. The unrest intensified after two coffee estate workers were killed within a week. The residents accused authorities of failing to ensure safety, with protests continuing outside the Forest Department office in Balehonnur. Police used lathi-charge and detained around 20 leaders as protests remained peaceful. Shops, markets, educational institutions, and private transport voluntarily supported the bandh from 8am to 5pm, with heavy police deployment to maintain order. The protests erupted following the death of Boramma, from Kudligi in Vijayanagara district, who was killed while working at a plantation near Hunasehalli in the Koppa forest range. Villagers protesting the incident faced police action, fuelling tensions further. Two FIRs were registered against over 29 individuals, with more than ten police

officers injured in clashes. The second attack involved Yallappa from Hanagal taluk. The incidents highlight escalating human-wildlife conflict in the region.

Meanwhile, State Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre directed officials to share real-time information about wild animal movements with local leaders, plantation associations, and labour unions through WhatsApp groups to prevent such tragedies. During an emergency video conference, Khandre emphasised the importance of quick communication and round-the-clock vigilance. He stressed that human safety must be prioritised, urging strict enforcement of prohibitory orders under section 144 during wildlife capture operations and the use of thermal drones.

Despite warnings, Boramma entered a plantation and was attacked. *—Salar News*

## LuLu crowns Young culinary star at Little Chef competition

LuLu Mall, Rajajinagar, was abuzz with youthful energy as it hosted the grand finale of the 4th Edition of the LuLu Funtura Little Chef Competition 2026. Designed for children aged 8 to 15, the contest drew over 300 participants showcasing their culinary talents.

After a rigorous multi-round audition, 20 semi-finalists competed, with the top 10 finalists — Nirvee Ashish, Kaira Jain, Sai Preetham D, Sumaiyah Shaikh, Nandakishan Ahmed, Mayukh Nagaraju, Himanya, Kushal P, and Gyaan S Kottar i— presenting inventive dishes ranging from appetizers to decadent desserts.

Judged by Mohammed Ashiq (Master Chef India), Archana BH, Varghese Thomas, and Chef Nanda Kumar, the competition celebrated healthy cooking habits.

Preetham impressed the panel and was crowned the winner, receiving a trophy, certificate, and Rs 50,000 cash prize. Runners-up Gyaan S Kottari and Mayukh Nagaraju won Rs 25,000 and Rs 10,000 respectively.

Mohammed Ashiq said, "Mentoring young chefs and helping them find their voice is incredibly rewarding." Shereef KK, Regional Director, LuLu Mall Bengaluru, added, "This competition allows children to showcase their culinary skills and creativity while fostering holistic development." Funtura Bangalore is the Karantaka's largest indoor amusement park.

***Advertorial**

**CARTONS HAD 'GOVT SUPPLY' TAG**

# *Unexpired medicines found in Raichur garbage heap*

**RAICHUR, 23 FEB**

A large quantity of government-supplied medicines was found dumped in a garbage heap near the cremation ground in Raichur on the road leading to Jalal Nagar on Sunday.

There were not expired medicines, but cough syrups, cold tonics, syringes, and other medicines that were still within their validity period were found in the heap. Locals saw heaps of syringes and cough syrup meant for small children and brought the matter to the attention of the Health Department.

Health officials said the dumped cough syrups were marked as 'Physician Sample', while some syringes were marked as 'Government Supply' *—SALAR*

Locals expressed outrage, stating that in government hospitals such as RIMS Hospital and Namma Clinic, doctors often ask outpatients to purchase drugs from outside.

Learning about the incident, District Health and Family Welfare Officer Dr Surendra Babu and drug control officials visited the spot.

The officials said that the dumped cartons of cough syrups were labelled "Physician Sample," while some syringes were marked as "Government Supply." Some medicines bore the name "Biological Limited."

An investigation will be held to find how and from where these medicines reached the spot. Action will be taken against those responsible for dumping them on the roadside, the officials said.

Later, Health Department officials collected the medicines in bags and removed them. *—Salar News*

— PTI

## Sharad Pawar stable, improving, says doctors

**PUNE, 23 FEB**

Sharad Pawar, the 85-year-old Chief of the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar faction), was admitted to Ruby Hall Clinic in Pune with dehydration. Doctors report he is stable and improving steadily, having begun oral fluids and a light diet. His vital signs remain within normal limits. Pawar, a Rajya Sabha member, continues supportive care and will stay under observation for two days for full recovery. He was previously admitted on 9 February with a chest infection and discharged on 14 February. Dr Purvez Grant, hospital chief cardiologist, confirmed his condition is improving, and he remains in a stable state. —*PTI*

## Birla forms MPs' 60-nations global friendship groups

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

Om Birla, Lok Sabha Speaker, established Parliamentary Friendship Groups with over 60 countries, including opposition members recently suspended for unruly behaviour. The groups aim to deepen global dialogue, covering trade, culture and social issues, with leaders from parties like Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and others as chairpersons. Notable leaders include Shashi Tharoor, P Chidambaram and Gaurav Gogoi. The groups facilitate direct communication with foreign counterparts, promoting legislative exchange and trust. Birla emphasises this as part of India's broader global outreach, strengthening diplomatic ties and projecting India as a confident democracy engaging in international collaboration. —*PTI*

## Two Maoist killed in an encounter in Odisha

**BERHAMPUR, 23 FEB**

At least two Maoists were killed in an encounter with security forces in a forest along the Ganjam-Kandhamal border in Odisha on Sunday, a police officer said. The encounter took place in Karada forest area within the jurisdiction of Raikia police station in Kandhamal district, SP Harisha BC said.

The deceased have been identified as Jagesh, an area committee member, and Rashmi, a party member of the CPI (Maoists). According to police, both had a combined bounty of Rs 27.50 lakh on their heads. Belonging to the Kalahandi Kandhamal Boudh Nayagarh (KKBN) division of the CPI (Maoists), the deceased were very active in the district and allegedly involved in several violent incidents, police added. —*PTI*

**CHHATTISGARH**

Left Wing Extremism (2-year report card)

Maoist killed **532**

| Surrendered | Arrested |
|---|---|
| 2,704 | 2,004 |

**DEVELOPMENT**

**Rs 1,109 crore** for 146 projects

| 449 | 728 |
|---|---|
| upgraded to 4G | new mobile towers |

# 'Israel Group' of JeM neutralised in J&K ops

## Self-styled commander Saifullah, and 2 others were killed

**JAMMU, 23 FEB**

Inspector General of Police (Jammu Zone) Bhim Sen Tuti said on Monday that in a joint operation, security forces have neutralised a seven-member Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror module, dubbed the "Israel Group", bringing an end to a year-and-a-half-long operation in the Kishtwar belt of Jammu and Kashmir.

Three members of the module, including its self-styled commander, Saifullah, were killed in an encounter with the security forces in Kishtwar district on Sunday.

"The group of seven JeM terrorists had infiltrated into Indian territory in April 2024. Since then, this group was engaged on 17 different occasions. Over the last year and a half, we have successfully neutralised all of them. Sunday marked the culmination of this year-and-a-half-long operation," the IGP told reporters at Kishtwar.

Describing the module as a "hardcore terrorist group", he said, "The group was known as the Israel Group. It was a hardcore terrorist module that inflicted significant damage on security forces and also caused harm to civilians."

The IGP asserted that the campaign against terror would continue until the entire terror network is completely dismantled.

Army personnel address a press briefing on the counter-insurgency operation, in Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir, on Monday —*PTI*

### Bomb threats creates scare in Delhi

Security has been tightened at all metro stations and prominent location across Delhi after a series of bomb threats were received via emails, an official said on Monday.

Multiple institutions, including the Delhi Secretariat, Delhi Assembly, Red Fort and two schools, received bomb threats emails earlier in the day, which were later declared hoaxes following extensive searches by security agencies.

"Our cyber teams are trying to trace the IP addresses using which some miscreants are issuing bomb threats. Such criminals are using Virtual Private Network (VPN) to send emails to mislead police investigation. But our experts will find out the culprits," a senior police officer said.

The emails stated "Delhi banega Khalistan" and warned of blasts at Delhi Army School, Red Fort and metro. —*PTI*

General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Counter-Insurgency Force Delta, Major General A P S Bal, speaking to reporters in Kishtwar issued a stern warning to anti-national elements, saying they would be identified and neutralised wherever they are.

Meanwhile, the Army on Monday termed the killing of three Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar a "massive blow to the terror network", and said it was the culmination of a relentless, high-altitude joint operation conducted over 326 days in extremely challenging terrain.

Troops of White Knight Corps, police and CRPF, based on a well-knit intelligence grid established by civil and military intelligence agencies, have finally eliminated all seven dreaded terrorists in Chatroo belt of Kishtwar (in several operations during last near one year)," the White Knight Corps said in a post on X. —*PTI*

**SIR FINAL LIST**

# 74 lakh voters names deleted in TN

**CHENNAI, 23 FEB**

The Election Commission on Monday released the final electoral roll for Tamil Nadu in which 74.07 lakh names of voters were deleted under various categories, leaving the number of electors in the southern state at 5.67 crore.

Addressing a press conference, Chief Electoral Officer Archana Patnaik said that before the SIR exercise, the state's electorate stood at 6.41 crore.

While 97.37 lakh names of voters were deleted during the SIR exercise, 74,07,207 names have been deleted from the state's voters' list during the revision, leaving the number of electors in the southern state at 5.67 crore as on today.

She said 7.40 lakh people in the 18-19 age bracket have been included in the electoral roll. Continuous updating will be taken up with immediate effect, she added.

The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, with reference to January 1,2026 as the qualifying date, was conducted in the state from October 27, 2025, and the final electoral roll was published today.

As on October 27, 2025, there were 6,41,14,587 electors enrolled in the state. Following the enumeration, draft roll was published on December 19, 2025, and the number stood at 5,43,76,756.

"Subsequently, during the period for filing of claims and objections from December 19, 2025, to January 30, 2026, the names of 27.53 lakh eligible electors were added, and 4.23 lakh ineligible persons' names were deleted," she said.

In final roll, the male voters account for 2,77,38,925; female: 2,89,60,838; and Third Gender: 7,617.

The number of electors in the age group of 18-19 years is 12.51 lakh, electors marked as Persons with Disability was 4.63 lakh and senior citizen electors (85+) are 3.99 lakh, Patnaik said. —*PTI*

# Let Stalin head INDIA bloc: Mani

**NEW DELHI/GULMARG, 23 FEB**

Veteran Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar on Monday said that DMK Chief MK Stalin is "best-suited" to be the convenor of the INDIA bloc, asserting that a smaller partner in the saddle would be a better assurance of alliance unity than a dominant one.

Speaking with PTI, Aiyar elaborated on his reasons for suggesting that the Tamil Nadu chief minister is the best option for being the convenor of the INDIA bloc.

Aiyar's repeated suggestion of Stalin's name has attracted fury from the Congress circles. He, however, said it would be in the interest of the Congress itself to see Stalin as the national convenor or president of the INDIA bloc.

"Under the current circumstances, with 2029 as the goal, no one is better-suited to lead the INDIA bloc than Dalapaty Mu Ka Stalin," Aiyar said.

He then went on to elaborate the reasons for suggesting Stalin's name and said that only a strong INDIA bloc could ensure a victory in the 2029 general elections, without which Rahul Gandhi cannot become the prime minister.

He said only Stalin can steer the bloc towards strength at the national level.

Meanwhile, amid talk of leadership change in the INDIA bloc, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Monday rallied behind Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying that he has been doing his job as the Leader of the Opposition and taking the government as well as the BJP to task. —*PTI*

TN CM & DMK Chief MK Stalin, Congress leader Mani Shankar Aiyar —*PTI*

# Over 160 academicians condemn Youth Cong's 'shirtless' protest

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

As many as 160 academicians have termed the Congress youth wing's protest at the AI Impact Summit last week "profoundly regrettable and ill-conceived", and said it reflected the opposition party's inability to distinguish between legitimate democratic dissent and the imperative of safeguarding national prestige on a global stage.

The protest "associated with Rahul Gandhi" conveyed an "unfortunate impression" at a time when global investors and technology leaders were assessing India's credibility as a long-term partner in artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced technologies, they said in a joint statement on Monday. "As a Member of Parliament, there exists a constitutional responsibility to distinguish between constructive democratic critique and actions that may inadvertently weaken India's international standing," they added.

— PTI

The signatories to the joint statement included JNU vice-chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, IIT Roorkee director Kamal Kishore Pant, IIT Dharwad director Venkappayya R Desai, IIT Jodhpur Director Avinash Kumar Agarwal, and vice-chancellors and professors of various universities.

On 20 February, a group of Indian Youth Congress workers staged a dramatic shirtless protest at an exhibition hall during the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi, walking around holding T-shirts with slogans against the government and the India-US trade deal printed on them. —*PTI*

TVK Chief Vijay addresses an administrators meeting of the party, in Vellore district, Tamil Nadu, on Monday —*PTI*

# Stalin's real friends are 'bribe, corruption': Vijay

**VELLORE, 23 FEB**

Launching yet another scathing attack on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, TVK founder Vijay on Monday alleged that the DMK president's real friends are "bribe, corruption, and eyeing political gains."

Addressing a meeting of party functionaries here, Vijay termed the Assembly polls due in April this year as a "surprising election" as all parties in the state are allegedly teamed up against him and reiterated that the contest was between the DMK and TVK only. Daring rivals to declare their assets, Vijay asked: "At this juncture, I would like to ask the present day's very big politicians a serious question. What was your assets before you came to politics? What is your assets after you joined politics? Can it be declared openly? Further, he also wanted the source of wealth; whether it was from business/work or if it was "swindled" after assuming power.

He alleged Stalin's "real friends are bribe, corruption, and eyeing political gains," and accused him of making false promises to the people and sought to debunk the governing party's claim of having developed Tamil Nadu into a "superstar state". —*PTI*

# Rajasthan: Ex-BJP MP draws flak for taking back blanket from Muslim woman

**JAIPUR, 23 FEB**

Former BJP MP Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria was at the centre of a raging controversy with a purported video showing him taking back a blanket from a Muslim woman during an event in Tonk after asking her to identify her religion.

As various Congress leaders criticised the action, some workers of its youth wing went back to Khareda village on Sunday night and gave blankets to a few women. Some villagers and Congress workers also held a protest against Jaunpuria on Monday.

Several Congress leaders shared a video of the incident on X in which Jaunpuria is seen purportedly saying that those who abuse Prime Minister Narendra Modi have no right to take the blanket.

Tonk MLA Sachin Pilot said that discrimination based on religion and caste is not only morally wrong but also a violation of constitutional rights.

BJP MLA from Jaipur's Hawamahal constituency, Balmukund Acharya, defended Jaunpuria, saying that the women might have said something wrong about the PM, which the ex-MP objected. The incident took place in Kareda village on Sunday, when he had gone to invite people for PM's visit to Ajmer. —*PTI*

## Rahul meets 'Mohammad Deepak', says will join his gym

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday met a gym owner from Uttarakhand who shot into the limelight as "Mohammad Deepak" for taking on Bajrang Dal activists allegedly harassing a Muslim shopkeeper, and expressed support by telling him that he would come to Kotdwar to take membership in the gym.

Congress leader Vaibhav Walia, the gym owner Deepak Kumar and his friend Vijay Rawat, along with several others, were present at the meeting, which took place at the 10, Janpanth residence of Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi.

"Every human being is equal. This is Indianness, this is 'mohabbat ki dukaan'. Meeting with brother Mohammad Deepak from Uttarakhand - This same flame of unity and courage should burn in every Indian youth," Rahul Gandhi, who also spoke with Deepak's wife over the phone, said in a Facebook post. After the meeting, Kumar told reporters, "Rahul ji invited me. He introduced me to Sonia ji and also spoke with my wife over the phone. He told me that you have done a good job and I will come to Kotdwar and take a membership at your gym." —*PTI*

Deepak Kumar with Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi —*PTI*

## Kerala lacks 'right govt' to make state prosper: Rijiju

**KOCHI, 23 FEB**

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday said Kerala lacks a government capable of taking the state to prosperity.

After inaugurating the NDA office here, the Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs said the state lacks a conducive government that can effectively implement the initiatives of the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre in Kerala.

He termed the inauguration of the NDA office and as a good beginning for the BJP and its allies united in Kerala. "It is a good beginning, and we are very hopeful that very soon, better and brighter days are coming for the people of Kerala," he said.

According to him, the people of Kerala have had enough of the alternate governments of the LDF and UDF for a long time. —*PTI*

**'MASTER OF DEFECTIONS'**

# *WB's 'Chanakya' Mukul Roy no more*

**KOLKATA, 23 FEB**

**Mukul Roy**, a backroom strategist once hailed as the 'Chanakya of West Bengal politics', defined an age of silent coups and shifting loyalties as an engineer of defections but, ironically, came to embody the very politics he perfected.

One of founding members of the TMC, Roy passed away early on Monday after prolonged illness.

Born in Kanchrapara in North 24 Parganas district in 1954, Mukul Roy began his political career with the Youth Congress in the 1980s. When Mamata Banerjee broke away from the Congress to form the Trinamool Congress in 1998, Roy was among the earliest to follow. Elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2006 and re-elected later, Roy became the TMC's leader in the Upper House in 2009. In the UPA-2 government, he served first as Minister of State for Shipping and later as the railway minister in 2012.

But his real theatre was West Bengal.

In an emotionally worded post on X, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she was "deeply shocked and grieved" at the sudden demise of her "long-time political colleague and co-fighter in many struggles".

"He devoted himself to the party from its very inception. His acceptability across all levels of the organisation was unquestionable," she wrote, recalling how Roy had worked 'pranpaat' (with utmost dedication) for the TMC since its birth in 1998. —*PTI*

## CM using corruption cases to control ministers: Raut

**MUMBAI, 23 FEB**

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP **Sanjay Raut** on Monday claimed Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis initiates action against ministers and later gives them a clean chit to maintain control.

Raut alleged that all Ministers were involved in corruption, the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), would not act until CM gave directions. The ACB recently raided an official in Minister Narhari Zirwal's department in link with bribery.

Meanwhile, Fadnavis on Monday led several leaders in paying tributes to the late Deputy CM Ajit Pawar on the first day of the Budget session, saying he was "the best CM the state never had". Meanwhile, MLA Rohit Pawar slammed the government's decision for aCBI probe into Ajit's crash. —*PTI*

# JNU warns against 'unruly behaviour'

## University admin accuses Leftist students of intimidating others to join their protest

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

The Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) administration warned of strong disciplinary and legal action after a clash between Left-wing groups and ABVP workers. Authorities have vowed to crack down on any unruly behaviour on the campus.

In an official statement, the JNU administration said protesting students had entered the central library and allegedly intimidated others to join their protest.

Several academic buildings were reportedly locked by protesting students, leading to a scuffle between different groups inside the campus.

"The administration has taken serious cognisance of these incidents," it stated, adding that strong action will be taken under university rules and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Classes will continue as scheduled. Left students alleged that ABVP members began stone-pelting during the protest, sharing videos showing people throwing stones.

The ABVP released footage of masked individuals entering the campus before the violence accusing Left-backed students of initiating a physical altercation, including attacks on women.

- The ABVP released footage of masked men entering the campus before the violence and accused Leftist students of initiating the violence, including attacks on women

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) claimed students protesting against the casteist remarks by the VC were assaulted with stones, forcing many to seek shelter inside the central library. It named ABVP members as leading the mob and accused the vice-chancellor of failing to address the protest. The union has announced a 'Long March' to the Ministry of Education on 26 February, reiterating its demand for her resignation.

ABVP representatives said the violence erupted after Left students attacked those studying in libraries. —*PTI*

ABVP state joint secretary Vikas Patel wearing a yellow dress addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Monday —*PTI*

## Police to probe Kerala toddler's death in hospital

**T'PURAM, 23 FEB**

Police have initiated an investigation following the death of 2.5-year-old Aisha Fathima in Kattakada, Kerala, amid allegations of medical negligence. The child, daughter of Sidique and Fasilath, first showed symptoms on 18 February, and was taken to a government hospital. After her condition improved, she was taken to a private hospital, then an ophthalmology centre, before her symptoms worsened. On 20 February, she was taken again to a private hospital, where after nebulisation and injections, she was declared dead. Her family filed a complaint, and a case of unnatural death has been registered. The cause will be known only after the autopsy. —*PTI*

—*PTI*

## Army rescues 46 tourists from snow-hit Sikkim

**KOLKATA, 23 FEB**

Indian Army troops rescued 46 tourists stranded in high-altitude Sikkim during heavy snowfall, a defence statement said. Several vehicles got stuck during sudden snowfall, exposing tourists and locals to extreme cold. Army units responded swiftly, rescuing the tourists and bringing them to the nearest camp. They were examined, provided with shelter, hot meals, heating, and relief materials. The statement noted, "All rescued individuals were stable and adequately cared for." The Army also helped in the safe movement of over 150 tourist vehicles to secure locations, ensuring safety amid the harsh weather conditions. —*PTI*

## UP villagers stage 'jal satyagraha' over water crisis

**SONBHADRA, 23 FEB**

The residents of Sinduriya village in this Uttar Pradesh district staged a protest alleging delay and irregularities in the Centre's tap water scheme and worsening drinking water scarcity. A large number of residents held a 'jal satyagraha' on the banks of the Son River on Sunday, accusing officials of negligence and corruption. Surendra Yadav, a villager, said the water crisis has intensified with the onset of summer. Arun Singh, executive engineer of UP Jal Nigam, said water connections had been installed in about 90 per cent of the villages, adding that normal supply would begin shortly. —*PTI*

—*PTI*

## Prez unveils first Indian Governor General's bust

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

President Droupadi Murmu on Monday unveiled the bust of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, India's first and only Indian Governor General of independent India, at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Rajagopalachari's bust, located on the grand staircase near Ashok Mandap, replaces Edwin Lutyens' bust, the main architect of many Delhi structures. The President's Secretariat stated that this move reflects India's cultural pride and honours contributions to Bharat Mata. Dignitaries present included Vice President CP Radhakrishnan, and ministers JP Nadda, S Jaishankar, Dharmendra Pradhan, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and L Murugan, along with Rajagopalachari's family. —*PTI*

## Andhra cops arrest Bihar IG for 'torture'

**PATNA, 23 FEB**

An IG rank officer in Bihar was on Monday arrested by Andhra Pradesh Police in connection with a five-year-old case of alleged custodial torture of a senior Telugu Desam Party leader.

Currently posted as the IG, Fire and Homeguards, Sunil Kumar Naik is a 2005 batch IPS officer, who had earlier been in Andhra Pradesh a few years ago on an inter-cadre deputation, was picked up from his official residence here.

The case in which he has been named pertains to an alleged incident of 2021 in Guntur district of the southern state, where Naik was then serving as a DIG(CID).

The complainant, K Raghu Rama Krishna Raju, currently the Deputy Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh legislative assembly, had alleged that he was arrested in connection with statements made against the then Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy who heads the YSR Congress, now the main opposition party in the southern state.

—*PTI*

According to Raju, who was then the MP from Narasapuram, he was allegedly tortured while in custody. In 2024, after the TDP was voted back to power, he lodged a case naming NaIk and a number of other police officials.

The Andhra Pradesh police has moved a court here to obtain transit remand, after which Nayak will be taken to the southern state. — *PTI*

## Delhi cops detect fake medicine factory in Bihar

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

The Delhi police has unearthed a factory involved in manufacturing and repackaging spurious medicines and psychotropic substances near Patna, an official said on Monday.

The action was taken during investigation of an First Information R registered under the NDPS Act at the Crime Branch police station, he said.

Acting on information gathered from previous arrests and the interrogation of accused Arun, the Crime Branch zeroed in on another suspect, Brijesh, who was allegedly running an illegal manufacturing and repackaging unit, a senior police officer said.

Arun was earlier found coordinating the illegal manufacture and distribution of opioids and operating a clandestine drug unit. Based on his disclosure, the team and the drug department raided the unit. — *PTI*

# Probe ordered into deletion of 91 Lucknow voters from list

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

The Supreme Court asked the Lucknow district election officer to examine the grievances of 91 residents of Akbar Nagar in the Lucknow who were allegedly excluded from the Uttar Pradesh SIR of electoral rolls after the demolition of their homes in September 2023.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was initially of the view that the matter, pertaining to the disputed facts relating to abode of the petitioners, cannot be looked into by it in a writ petition here.

The bench, however, took note of the petition on Monday filed by one Sana Parveen and 90 others and asked the district election officer of Lucknow to enquire into the grievances.

It also allowed the petitioners to approach the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court if they fail to get relief from the DEO.

The petitioners sought a direction to submit their enumeration forms to BLOs to ensure that their right to vote is protected.

The petitioners said they were long-term residents of Akbar Nagar whose names had appeared in the voter lists as far back as 2002.

However, after the demolition of "unauthorised" structures in 7the area they found themselves excluded from SIR. The primary reason for their exclusion, the petitioners claimed, is that they currently lack "identifiable addresses." Senior advocate MR Shamshad, appearing for the petitioners, informed the bench that the residents were part of a special list during the 2025 revision process and should not be disenfranchised due to their displacement. —*PTI*

The SC bench asked the Lucknow District Election Officer to enquire into the removal of some voters from the voters' list —*PTI*

### Sonam plea hearing put off

The SC on Monday adjourned to 26 February the hearing on a plea filed by Gitanjali J Angmo, the wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, against the latter's detention under the National Security Act. Justices Aravind Kumar and PB Varale deferred the matter as Solicitor General Tushar Mehta was not available. Earlier, the court had asked the Centre if it could relook the detention of Wangchuk, considering his health. Additional SG KM Nataraj had submitted that Wangchuk was responsible for the violence in Leh last year. —*PTI*

### 'Decide Sukesh wife's bail'

The SC asked the Delhi HC to decide within three weeks the bail plea of Leena Paulose, the wife of alleged conman Sukesh Chandrasekhar, in a Rs 200 crore extortion case. Justices MM Sundresh and N Kotiswar Singh said on Monday after the lawyer appearing for Paulose said that her bail plea was pending for over a year in the HC. The Delhi police had booked Chandrashekar for allegedly duping the wives of the former promoters of Ranbaxy, Shivinder Singh and Malvinder Singh, of Rs 200 crore. —*PTI*

## Tirumala row: SC junks plea against SIT report review

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

The Supreme Court refused to entertain a plea of Subramanian Swamy challenging the Andhra Pradesh government's decision to appoint a one-member committee to review the SIT report on the Tirumala laddu controversy.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymala Bagchi who heard Swamy's plea on Monday, also assailed statements made by the Andhra Pradesh chief minister on the row. "There is no conflict of interest/overlapping, and the scope of the investigation/enquiry, having been well demarcated, shows that apprehension of the petitioner is baseless. Let both processes continue," the court said.

Swamy argued that the state government's move undermines the SIT's authority, which was constituted earlier by the Supreme Court to probe irregularities in the laddus distributed by the TTD. —*PTI*

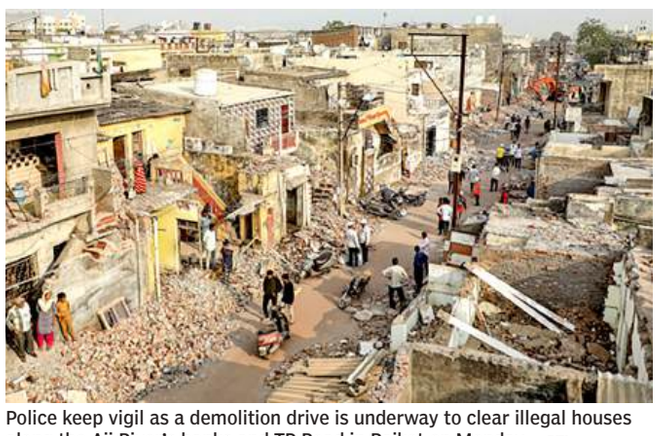
# Rajkot admin to demolish 1,400 houses

**RAJKOT, 23 FEB**

The Rajkot civic body launched a mega drive on Monday to demolish around 1,400 illegal settlements over a 2.5-km area in the city under tight security, officials said.

Around 65 earth-excavating machines, along with tractors, dumpers and other heavy machinery, were deployed in the Jangleshwar area along the Aji riverbed.

The Rajkot Municipal Corporation (RMC) launched the demolition drive in the Jangleshwar area as per the orders of Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi.



Police keep vigil as a demolition drive is underway to clear illegal houses along the Aji River's banks and TP Road in Rajkot on Monday —*PTI*

Since the illegal properties are spread across a 2.5-km stretch, the demolition is expected to continue for three days, Rajkot Zone-1 Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Hetal Patel said.

Authorities had been assisting residents who voluntarily vacated their properties over the past two days. Notices had been issued to ensure residents were prepared, and water and electricity connections were disconnected before the demolition began, she said. The demolition is being supervised by around 1,000 municipal corporation staff at the site. —*PTI*

## MINORS STAB BOY 27 TIMES IN 30 SECS

**BHOPAL, 23 FEB**

A class 10 student was stabbed 27 times in 30 seconds inside a snooker club in Bhopal. In a disturbing twist, the accused themselves allegedly circulated the CCTV footage on social media.The CCTV footage shows two minors entering the club in a planned, film style. They corner the victim and assault using a knife and a dagger. In half a minute, the 16-year-old boy was stabbed 27 times. The attackers then fled.

The victim suffered 10 deep cuts on one wrist, while two fingers on his other hand were severed. He also sustained serious injuries on his shoulder and back. Despite the brutal assault, the teenager somehow managed to break free and escape.

CCTV footage showing the attack on the boy —*SCREENGRAB*

He was rushed to the hospital and is undergoing treatment.

The accused, also 16-year-old class 10 students attend the same coaching centre as the victim. —*PTI*

**SECURITY TIGHTENED**

# *Mosques in UP city covered before 'Juta Maar Holi'*

**SHAHJAHANPUR, 23 FEB**

The authorities have covered mosques and mazars along the routes of the traditional 'Juta Maar Holi' procession in Shahjahanpur with tarpaulin sheets and have provided enhanced security for the event, officials said on Monday.

'Juta Mar Holi' is a centuries-old tradition celebrated in Shahjahanpur on the day of Holi, when people hurl shoes and sandals at a person dressed as a British-era 'Laat Sahab' and riding a buffalo cart as the centrepiece, while playing with colours.

SP Rajesh Dwivedi said, along with the deployment of over 200 magistrates, this year's procession will see around one-and-a-half times more security personnel than last year.

Four ASPs, 13 Circle Officers, 310 sub-inspectors, 1,200 constables and 500 home guards will be deployed, the SSP said.

In addition, four companies, each of the Provincial Armed Constabulary and Rapid Action Force, along with a team of the National Disaster Response Force, will also be deployed, he added. Over 100 solar-powered CCTV cameras have been installed along the eight-kilometre route of the 'Bade Lat Sahab' and 'Chhote Lat Sahab' processions to ensure uninterrupted surveillance even during power outages.

A mosque covered with tarpaulin to prevent against the possible spilling of Holi colours, ahead of the traditional 'Laat Saheb' procession on Holi, in Shahjahanpur in UP —*PTI*

While urging people to celebrate Holi peacefully, Dwivedi vowed action against those disrupting the procession.

Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Rajneesh Kumar Mishra said, 48 mosques and mazars along the route have been completely covered with thick plastic sheets.

Historian Dr Vikas Khurana of Swami Sukdevanand College said the procession traces its origins to 18th century when Nawab Abdullaha Khan went to Farukhabad after falling out with his family. When he returned to Shahjahanpur in 1728, it coincided with Holi, and Hindus and Muslims jointly celebrated the festival with a procession. — *PTI*

## 23 held after clash over Shivaji statue in M'rashtra district

**BULDHANA, 23 FEB**

Police arrested 23 people and imposed orders banning gatherings in a village in Maharashtra's Buldhana district after two groups clashed over the installation of a statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, police said on Monday.

Buldhana SP Nilesh Tambe said that supporters of two local leaders attacked each other in Chikhla Kakad village of Lonar taluka on 20 February over the installation of a statue of the Maratha king on the Gram Panchayat grounds.

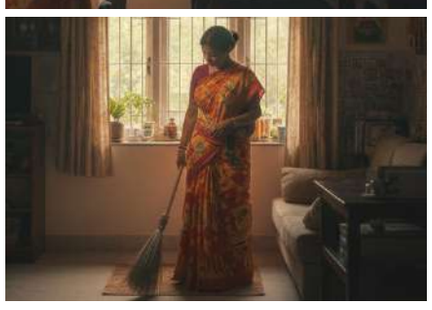
Sources said an argument over who would install the statue escalated into violence, and there was a fresh flare-up on Sunday.

Tambe said the police arrested 23 people in connection with the violence and on Sunday evening invoked Section 163 of BNSS banning all gatherings and meetings in the district. — *PTI*

## 86 YEARS OF DALAI LAMA

Tibetans in exile marked 86 years since the enthronement of the 14th Dalai Lama at the Thekchen Choeling Tsuglakhang monastery in Himachal's McLeod Ganj. On 22 February, 1940, 4-year-old Tenzin Gyatso was seated on the Golden Throne at the Potala Palace in China. Dalai Lama has lived in exile in India since 1959, following a failed uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet. Meanwhile, China criticised US after Secretary of State Marco Rubio appointed Riley M Barnes as US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. Beijing called the move interference, though Dalai Lama has welcomed such appointments —PTI

# Housewives not idle, unjust to disregard her labour: HC



—AI

### PAYMENTS FOR HOUSEWIVES

**Venezuela**
In 2007, it became the first country to pay stay-at-home housewives. When the rule was rolled out at least 1,00,000 women were paid $180/month. However, there is no update on the recent payments.

**Russia**
It has proposed draft legislation that would recognise domestic work as a labour deserving monthly financial support.

**China**
Under civil law, homemakers can claim household labour compensation from a spouse during divorce.

Dispelling the "myth" of an "idle wife", the Delhi High Court has said that a homemaker's labour enables the earning spouse to function effectively, and it was "unjust" to disregard her contributions while deciding maintenance.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma observed that a wife's non-employment cannot be equated with idleness or deliberate dependence, and when determining maintenance, the law must recognise not only financial earnings but also the economic value of her contributions to the home and domestic relationship during the subsistence of marriage.

"The assumption that a non-earning spouse is 'idle' reflects a misunderstanding of domestic contributions. To describe non-employment as idleness is easy; to recognise the labour involved in sustaining a household is far more difficult," the court in its judgment passed on 16 February.

"A homemaker does not sit idle; she performs labour that enables the earning spouse to function effectively. To disregard this contribution while adjudicating claims of maintenance would be unrealistic and unjust.

"This court is, therefore, unable to agree with any view that equates non-employment of a wife with idleness or deliberate dependence on the husband," it said.

The court made the observations while dealing with the grant of maintenance to an estranged wife under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

A magisterial court had refused to grant interim maintenance to the woman on the grounds that she was able-bodied and well-educated but had chosen not to seek employment. No relief was granted to the wife by the appellate court.

The parties married in 2012, and it was alleged that the husband deserted the wife and their minor son in 2020.

The husband claimed before the high court that the wife cannot sit "idle" and claim maintenance when she was capable of earning, and that he was meeting the educational expenses of their minor child. The court said the capacity to earn and actual earnings were distinct concepts, and as per settled law, mere capacity to earn was not a ground to deny maintenance.

"Women who can and are willing to work should be encouraged, but the denial of maintenance on the sole ground that she is capable of earning and should not remain dependent upon her husband was a flawed approach," the court said.

"Managing a household, caring for children, supporting the family, and adjusting one's life around the career and transfers of the earning spouse are all forms of work, even though they are unpaid and often unacknowledged. These responsibilities do not appear in bank statements or generate taxable income, yet they form the invisible structure on which many families function," the court noted.

It added that in Indian society, a woman was still expected to give up employment after marriage but a contrary position was frequently taken by husbands in matrimonial disputes to refuse maintenance to her "well-qualified" wife by accusing her of deliberately choosing to remain unemployed. Such a stand, the court said, cannot be encouraged, and the law must ensure that the spouse who invested time, effort and years into building the family was not left economically stranded.

It also acknowledged that a woman who stepped away from her profession due to marriage or family responsibilities cannot be expected to later resume employment at the same level, salary, or professional standing.

The court concluded that in the present case, there was no material on record to establish any past or present employment or earnings of the wife, and awarded Rs 50,000 to her in proceedings under the law against domestic violence.

The court also raised concern over maintenance proceedings often becoming "intensely adversarial", saying it rarely served the long-term interests of either parties, or their minor children.

It said that mediation, and not continued litigation, offered a more constructive path forward in matrimonial disputes, as it provided a better space for meaningful dialogue, realistic assessment of needs and capacities of both the husband and the wife, and mutually acceptable solutions.

Court proceedings make initiation of dialogue between the parties difficult, and in such contested proceedings, the wife might overstate her monthly expenses while the husband often understates his income or pleads financial incapacity, it said. —PTI

## LETTERS

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## SALAR

# SC: Female foeticide crude reflection of social malady

The Supreme Court on Monday said discrimination against women, more particularly against the girl child, is widely prevalent across several parts of the country and female foeticide is a crude manifestation of this social malady.

A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Ujjal Bhuyan refused to quash a case lodged against a Gurugram-based radiologist for offences under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, and said it cannot nip the trial against him in the bud.

"Discrimination against the girl child and by extension women is still prevalent in several parts of the country. Crude and ugly manifestation of such social malady is in the form of female foeticide. The first step towards the commission of such an offence is in the sex determination of the foetus," the bench said.

It added that Parliament has stepped in to not only outlaw sex determination and selection but also to prohibit all related pre-conception and pre-natal techniques and procedures, making it mandatory to maintain the relevant record in the prescribed format.

"Non-maintenance of the record in the prescribed form would be an offence under the PCPNDT Act and Rules. In so far the present case is concerned, prima facie, it has come on record that the appellant had conducted ultrasonography on the pregnant woman.

"Whether or not he has maintained the record as required under the law, in addition to non-disclosure of the sex of the foetus, is a matter for trial. Therefore, it is not a case where the trial should be nipped in the bud," the bench said.

- Elaborating on the objective of law, it said a skewed sex ratio is likely to lead to greater incidences of violence against women and an rise in practices of trafficking, bride-buying etc.

Refusing to interfere with an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, it said the case pending before the Gurugram judicial magistrate cannot be quashed.

"Therefore, no interference is called for in the impugned judgment and order of the high court. However, we make it clear that we have not expressed any opinion on the merit of the allegations and all contentions qua reliability and admissibility of evidence are kept open," the apex court said.

It, however, found fault with the procedure adopted in the raid conducted against the radiologist and said the civil surgeon is the chairperson of the District Appropriate Authority under the PCPNDT Act but the communication issued by him does not indicate any decision being taken collectively by the authority to conduct a raid on the premises of appellant Naresh Kumar Garg.

"Nothing has been placed on record by the respondents to show that there was any meeting of mind of the members of the District Appropriate Authority on the basis of which the chairperson had issued the communication/order dated September 17, 2015. "If that be the position, then the ratio in Ravindra Kumar (an earlier verdict) would be applicable to this case as well, on the basis of which the search carried out by the District Appropriate Authority, Gurugram, at Vatika Medicare i.e. the premises where the appellant worked, would be illegal...," the bench said.

It said the PCPNDT Act of 1994 was enacted to prohibit sex selection, leading to female foeticide, and aims to arrest the declining sex ratio in the country.

"The objectives of the PCPNDT Act declare that the said Act provides for prohibition of sex selection, before or after conception, and for regulation of pre-natal diagnostic techniques to prevent their misuse for sex determination, leading to female foeticide, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto," it said.

Elaborating on the objective of the law, the bench said a skewed sex ratio is likely to lead to greater incidences of violence against women and an increase in practices of trafficking, bride-buying etc.

"It is an effort to save the girl child. The focus of the PCPNDT Act is to protect the right to life of the girl child under Article 21 of the Constitution of India," the bench said, adding that with a view to prevent such a crime and align with the global perspective for a discrimination-free world that the law was enacted. —PTI

People protesting against female foeticide —EPA

# *El Mencho: The Mexican kingpin who built the most powerful drug cartel*

The Mexican Army killed the country's most powerful cartel leader and one of the United States' most wanted fugitives on Sunday, notching a major victory while cartel members responded with a wave violence across the country.

The killing of Jalisco New Generation Cartel leader Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes during an attempt to capture him in Jalisco state was the highest-profile blow against cartels since the recapture of former Sinaloa cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán a decade ago.

Following Oseguera Cervantes' death, gunmen unleashed violence across the country. Cars burned out by cartel members blocked roads in nearly a dozen Mexican states and left smoke billowing into the air. People locked themselves in their homes in Guadalajara, Mexico's second-largest city and Jalisco's capital, and school was canceled Monday in several states as security forces were placed on alert all over the country. Even Guatemala reinforced security on its border with Mexico.

The killing could give the government a leg up in its dealings with the U.S. Trump administration, which has been threatening tariffs or unilateral military action if Mexico does not show results in the fight against the cartels.

But the long-term effect on Mexico's security landscape remains unclear.

**HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW:**

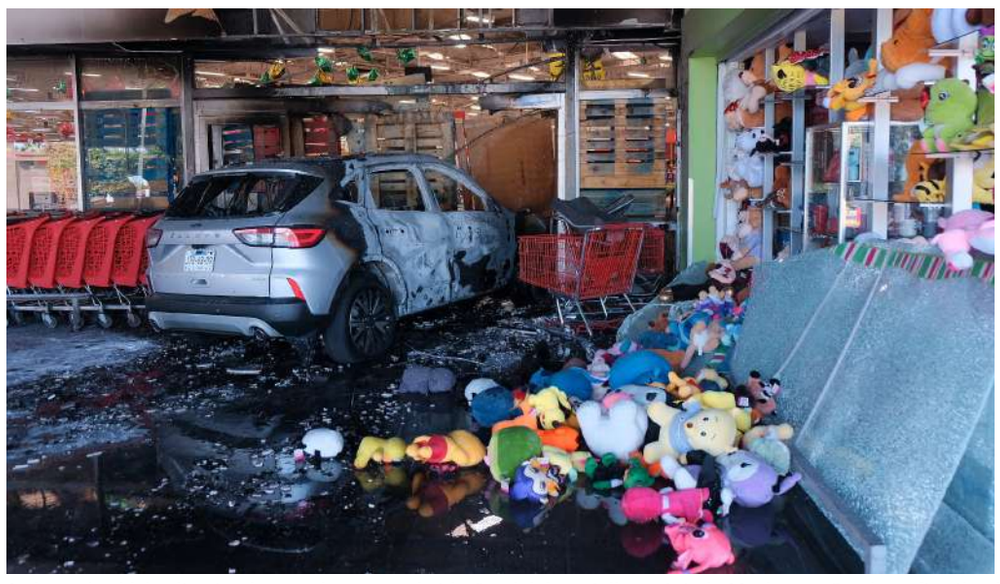
El Mencho' was the leader of a fast-growing criminal group

Oseguera Cervantes, better known as "El Mencho," was 59 years old and originally from the western state of Michoacan. His ties to organized crime went back at least three decades.

In 1994, he was tried for trafficking heroin in the U.S. and sent to prison for three years. Upon returning to Mexico, he quickly rose through Mexico's drug trafficking underworld.

Around 2009, he founded the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, which became Mexico's fastest-growing criminal organization, moving cocaine, methamphetamines, fentanyl and migrants to the United States, and innovating in violence with the use of drones and improvised explosive devices.

The cartel earned a reputation for brazen attacks on Mexican security forces, including downing a military helicopter in Jalisco in 2015 and attempting a spectacular, but unsuccessful, assassination of Mexico City Police Chief Omar García Harfuch, who is now Mexico's federal security secretary.



A charred vehicle sits at a damaged supermarket in Guadalajara, Jalisco state in Mexico, on Sunday, after the death of the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes, known as 'El Mencho' —PTI

It recruited aggressively, experimenting with new ways to reach potential members online.

Mexico is keen to show Trump results in the fight against cartels

Oseguera Cervantes' will help Mexico's government show results to the US, which is pressuring its neighbor to pursue drug cartels more aggressively. Both countries said intelligence collaboration helped lead to Sunday's operation.

Oseguera Cervantes was facing multiple indictments in the United States and the U.S. State Department had offered a $15 million reward for information leading to his arrest. The Trump administration designated his cartel and others foreign terrorist organisations a year ago.

US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau, who was U.S. ambassador to Mexico during the first Trump administration, applauded the operation via X, writing "The good guys are stronger than the bad guys. Congratulations to the forces of law and order in the great Mexican nation."

Mike Vigil, former chief of international operations for the DEA, said Mexico had sent a "a strong message to Donald Trump's administration that they are fighting aggressively and effectively" against the most powerful cartels. He added that "the majority of the information came from the Mexican armed forces and all credit goes to Mexico."

**CARTEL LEADER'S DEATH LEAVES A POWER VACUUM**

It's not clear who will succeed Oseguera Cervantes, or if any one person can.

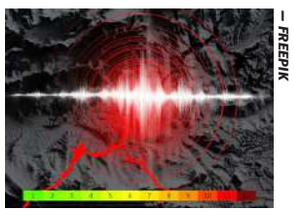
The Jalisco cartel has a presence in at least 21 of Mexico's 32 states and is active in almost all of the United States, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. But it is also a global organisation and the loss of its leader could be felt well beyond Mexico.

"El Mencho controlled everything, he was like a country's dictator," Vigil said.

His absence could slow the cartel's rapid growth and expansion and leave it initially weakened against the Sinaloa cartel on several fronts where they or their proxies are fighting. The Sinaloa is locked in its own internal power struggle, however, between the sons of "El Chapo" and the faction loyal to Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, who is in U.S. custody.

Vigil said Mexico should seize the moment to launch "an effective frontal assault based on intelligence." "This is a big opportunity for Mexico and the United States if they work together," he said.

Security analyst David Saucedo said that if relatives of Oseguera Cervantes take control of the cartel, the violence seen Sunday could continue. If others take power, they could be more willing to turn the page and continue operations. —PTI



— FREEPIK

## 7.1 magnitude earthquake shakes coast of Malaysia

**KUALA LAMPUR, 23 FEB**

A powerful 7.1-magnitude earthquake struck early on Monday in eastern Malaysia. The epicentre of the quake was located less than 100km north-east of Kota Kinabalu, the capital of its coastal Sabah state at a depth of 619.8km, the US Geological Survey said. The head of MetMalaysia, Moh Hisham Mohd Anip said that the quake occurred off Sabah's coast because the state lies near the Pacific ring of fire, a seismically active zone. Authoroties are monitoring the situation and "no aftershocks were observed" so far. Residents living in Kota Kinabalu and the surrounding areas reported feeling the impacts of the earthquake. "The quake lasted around 10 seconds, but felt much longer," a driver in Putatun recounted. *—ANI*

## 19 killed in bus accident in Nepal

**KATHMANDU, 23 FEB**

At least 19 people were killed when a passenger bus fell into the Trishuli river near Gajuri in the Dhading district of Nepal early on Monday. Twenty-six passengers were injured in the accident that occurred when the bus coming towards Kathmandu from Pokhara plunged into the river along the Prithvi Highway. While 17 bodies were recovered from the accident site, 28 injured passengers were rescued from the bus. The injured passengers were admitted to different hospitals for treatment. Nepal Army, Armed Police Force and Nepal Police personnel are engaged in the rescue work. The deceased included one person from New Zealand. One Japanese and a Dutch national were among those injured. *—PTI*

## Youngest PM-led Dutch coalition govt sworn in

**THE HAGUE, 23 FEB**

Dutch King Willem-Alexander has sworn in a new minority Dutch coalition government led by the Netherlands' youngest-ever Prime Minister, who will have to use all his bridge-building skills to pass laws and see out a full four-year term in office. Rob Jetten, 38, heads a three-party administration made up of his centrist D66, the centre-right Christian Democrats and the centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy.The parties together hold only 66 seats of the lower house of parliament's 150 seats. Following a traditional photo of the new Cabinet, the new government plans to begin work with its first Cabinet meeting in the afternoon. The king wished the new government good luck during these"uncertain times." *—PTI*

# Mexico braces for more violence

## Prez urges calm as cartel blocks 250+ roads

**MEXICO CITY, 23 FEB**

Mexico was paralysed by a wave of coordinated violence after the army killed the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) leader, triggering unrest across the country.

More than 250 roadblocks were set up in 20 states, forcing schools to close and prompting Mexican and foreign authorities to urge residents to stay indoors. By late Sunday, officials said most barricades were dismantled.

In Guadalajara, the capital of Jalisco and Mexico's second-largest city, streets were largely empty as flights were suspended and the international airport operated with limited staff. Travellers ran for cover amid fears of gunfire. Jacinta Murcia, 64, described her anxiety as she tried to reach home after dark while her children tracked her phone. "I'm scared of everything — blockades, a curfew, that something could happen," she said.

Authorities in Jalisco, Michoacán and Guanajuato reported at least 14 additional deaths, including seven National Guard troops. Smoke was seen rising near beaches in Puerto Vallarta as tourists watched. More than 1,000 people were stranded overnight at Guadalajara Zoo, sleeping on buses under police guard after violence made travel unsafe.

President Claudia Sheinbaum appealed for calm, while the US Embassy ordered staff in eight cities and Michoacán to shelter in place. US Ambassador Ron Johnson praised Mexican forces, highlighting what he called unprecedented bilateral cooperation under President Donald Trump.

Security analyst David Mora of the International Crisis Group warned the power vacuum could embolden rival criminal groups seeking to expand territory. He said the government's increasingly combative approach signalled to Washington that Mexico could tackle organised crime without US troops on its soil.

The killing is viewed as a defining test for Sheinbaum as she intensifies a crackdown on drug trafficking, amid sustained pressure from Trump over fentanyl flows and threats of tariffs or unilateral action. *—PTI*

A soldier stands guard by a vehicle recently set on fire in Cointzio, Mexico on Sunday, following the death of the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, Nemesio Oseguera, known as 'El Mencho' *—PTI*

## Man shot dead at Mar-a-Lago was missing for days

**WASHINGTON, 23 FEB**

A 21-year-old man who was reported missing was shot dead by the US Secret Service early on Sunday for trying to drive into President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Palm Beach, Florida. Trump was at the White House.

The man, identified as **Austin Tucker Martin,** entered the estate's north gate where he was confronted by two Secret Service agents and a Palm Beach County sheriff's deputy. He put down a gas can when ordered to drop his items, then raised the shotgun. "The agents and the deputy fired their weapons to neutralize the threat," Sheriff Bradshaw told reporters.

Martin had been reported missing by his family several days before the incident. A motive has not been established, and investigators are working to compile a psychological profile of Martin.

FBI Director Kash Patel, said it would dedicate "all necessary resources" to the investigation. *—PTI*

# Trade wars: EU suspends US deal citing SC ruling

**BEIJING/ BRUSSELS, 23 FEB**

The European Parliament suspended the ratification process of a sweeping trade deal with the US on Monday. In the latest fallout from the US Supreme Court's decision to strike down a significant portion of President Donald Trump's tariffs. Following an emergency meeting in Brussels, lawmakers said that US' commitment to the deal is 'shrouded in uncertainty.'

As the EU's announcement broke, Trump took to social media to threaten any nation attempting to leverage the recent legal shift. He warned that 'any country that wants to "play games" with the ridiculous supreme court decision... will be hit with a much higher tariff.' Trump punctuated the post with a stark, three-word warning: "BUYER BEWARE!!!"

The US Supreme Court on Friday ruled against Trump's trade policy, noting that the President lacked authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose sweeping import duties on goods from all US trading partners. In its verdict, the court held that the IEEPA does not grant the President the power to levy tariffs.

Earlier on Saturday, following the court's verdict, Trump said that he is raising the worldwide tariff—initially announced immediately after the ruling—to the 'fully allowed and legally tested 15 per cent.'

In a post on Truth Social, Trump stated that his administration will continue 'the process of "Making America Great Again—GREATER THAN BEFORE" with new, legally permissible tariffs.

**'NO WINNERS IN A TRADE WAR'**

A spokesperson for China's Ministry of Commerce on Monday stated that China has consistently opposed unilateral tariff increases in all forms, and that there are no winners in a trade war. The spokesperson added that the unilateral measures taken by the US, including the reciprocal and fentanyl-related tariffs, not only violate international trade but also contravene US domestic law, Global Times reported.

Meanwhile, a White House official confirmed that President Trump is set to visit China from 31 March to 2 April. *—ANI*

# Next US-Iran talks in Geneva on 26 Feb

**DUBAI, 22 FEB**

The next round of talks between the United States and Iran will be Thursday in Geneva, Oman's Foreign Minister said Sunday, shortly after Tehran's top diplomat said he expected to meet US envoy Steve Witkoff then.

Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi said on social media he was pleased to confirm the development, "with a positive push to go the extra mile towards finalising the deal." Oman previously hosted the indirect talks,facilitated the latest round in Geneva last week.

There was no immediate comment from the White House.

Confirmation of new talks came as new anti-government protests began in Iran, according to witnesses, as university students in Tehran and another city demonstrated around memorials for thousands of people killed in a crackdown on previous nationwide demonstrations about six weeks ago.

Iran's state news agency said students protested at five universities in the capital, Tehran, and one in the city of Mashhad on Sunday.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had told CBS in an interview aired Sunday that a "good chance" remained for a diplomatic solution on the nuclear issue, adding it was the only matter being discussed.

President Donald Trump warned on Friday that limited strikes against Iran are possible, even as Araghchi at the time said Tehran expected to have a proposed deal ready in the next few days. *—PTI*

An elderly Iranian woman walks next to an anti-US mural in Tehran on Monday— *[ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH/ EPA]*

# B'desh rejigs Army, India advisor recalled

**DHAKA, 22 FEB**

There was a major reshuffle at the top level in the Bangladesh Army on Sunday, including the appointment of a new Chief of General Staff (CGS), local media reported.

The changes, issued by Army Headquarters, came days after Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's new government assumed power.

The reshuffle affects strategic commands and the premier intelligence agency.

Lieutenant General M Mainur Rahman has been appointed as the CGS while he was previously serving as the chief or General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Army Training and Doctrine Command (ARTDOC), Prothom Alo reported, quoting sources in the defence ministry.

As per the reshuffle, the principal staff officer (PSO), Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hasan, was replaced by just-promoted Lieutenant General Mir Mushfiqur Rahman.

Hasan has been attached to the foreign ministry to be appointed as an ambassador abroad.

Major General Kaiser Rashid Chowdhury has been appointed Director General of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), the report said.

Currently serving as a brigadier general at Army Headquarters, he will assume the post upon his promotion to major general.

Bangladesh's Defence Adviser to India, Brigadier General Md Hafizur Rahman, has been called back to Bangladesh to lead an infantry division in the role of Major General. *—PTI*

## EU diplomats to meet Board of Peace chief over Gaza future

**BRUSSELS, 23 FEB**

European Union diplomats are scheduled to meet on Monday with the director of the Board of Peace in Brussels, following a controversial endorsement of US President Donald Trump's efforts to rebuild Gaza.

Nikolay Mladenov, a former Bulgarian politician and UN diplomat appointed to manage the board, will meet EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas and ministers from the 27 member states. Talks will also cover the war in Ukraine and Russia's sanctions.

The EU maintains close links with Israel and the Palestinians, oversees the Rafah border crossing, and donating to the Palestinian Authority. The Trump-led board has divided nations.

The EU backs the UN's mandate in Gaza. Hungary and Bulgaria are full members of the board, with Turkey, Kosovo, and Albania as candidate countries. *—PTI*

# ICC starts hearing on ex-Philippine prez

**THE HAGUE, 23 FEB**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) started pre-trial hearings today for former Philippine president **Rodrigo Duterte**, who faces three counts of crimes against humanity linked to deadly anti-drugs operations during his presidency.

Duterte, 80, did not appear in court, having waived his right to be present, as prosecutors outlined their case regarding his alleged involvement in dozens of killings during his war on drugs. The charges span his time as both mayor of Davao and president, which Duterte dismisses as "an outrageous lie."

The hearing is not a trial but allows prosecutors to present evidence; judges have 60 days to decide whether to confirm the charges. Last month, judges deemed Duterte fit for trial after concerns over his health led to a postponement.

Rights groups and victims' families welcomed the arrest, calling it a step towards justice. Critics, including Duterte's daughter, Vice President Sara Duterte, oppose the court's jurisdiction, with some fearing a return to form if another Duterte assumes power.*—PTI*

- Rodrigo Duterte faces three counts of crimes against humanity linked to deadly anti-drugs operations during his presidency. Though he did not appear in court, having waived his right to be present.

## Security case: Hong Kong court upholds convictions of activists

**HONG KONG, 23 FEB**

A Hong Kong court dismissed all appeals and upheld the subversion convictions of pro-democracy advocates in the city's largest national security case involving 47 defendants.

This prosecution stifled the city's pro-democracy movement born of the 2019 protests. After 45 defendants were sentenced to four to ten years in 2024, international governments and rights groups condemned the move.

Eleven activists lost their appeals. Two activists, including were acquitted. Judges ruled the plan to paralyse Hong Kong's government unlawful, describing it as a "constitutional mass destruction weapon".

Critics say the convictions show how dissent was crushed post-2019 protests, while authorities argue the law was necessary for stability. Some supporters outside the court expressed relief at the releases of activists. *—PTI*

**BRITISH ACADEMY FILM AWARDS**

# *Ryan Coogler makes black history with his 'Sinners' screenplay*

**LONDON, 23 FEB**

Ryan Coogler's vampire horror film 'Sinners' — set in the Jim Crow South and featuring a predominantly Black cast — claimed three BAFTAs on Sunday, headlined by a landmark win for Coogler himself. The writer-director took home Best Original Screenplay, becoming the first Black person to win in the category. Coogler's film is historic for more than one reason. It represents a seismic shift in creator rights. In 2024, Warner Bros won a heated bidding war against Sony and Universal. The first-of-its-kind deal lets Coogler have final cut privileges. Most notably, after 25 years, full ownership of the film reverts to Coogler. This unprecedented retention of IP sets a new standard for creative autonomy in Hollywood. Gothic horror 'Frankenstin' also had a strong showing, securing three awards. Chloe Zhao's 'Hamnet', an adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's historical novel, was named best British film. The evening's most notable shortfall came for Josh Safdie's 'Marty Supreme', with 11 nominations left without a single win. The BAFTAs are widely seen as a bellwether for Hollywood's upcoming Academy Awards. *—PTI*

## AND THE BAFTA GOES TO...

**'SINNERS'**

Best Supporting Actress
**WUNMI MOSAKU**

Best Original Screenplay
**RYAN COOGLER**

Best Original Score
**OLAFLUR ARNALDS**

**'Frankenstein'**

- Best Costume Design
- Best Make Up & Hair
- Best Production Design

- 'Mr Nobody Against Putin' **Best Documentary**
- 'This Is Endometriosis' **Best British Short Film**
- 'Two Black Boys in Paradise' **Best British Short Animation**
- 'I Swear' **Best Casting**
- 'Zootopia 2' **Best Animated Film**
- 'F1': **Best Sound**
- 'Sentimental Value' **Best Film Not in the English Language**
- 'EE Rising Star Award' **Robert Aramayo**

Alia Bhatt co-awarded director Joachim Trier for 'Sentimental Value' as the Best Non-English Film. In a graceful nod to her roots, Bhatt greeted the audience with a traditional "Namaskar" before making her presentation in Hindi.

## Gold futures rally by Rs 2,946 to Rs 1.59 lakh/10g

NEW DELHI, 23 FEB

Gold surged by Rs 2,946 to Rs 1,59,822 per 10g in the futures trade on Monday, tracking strong trends in the international market amid renewed global tariff worries. On the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold futures for April delivery rallied by Rs 2,946 or 1.88 per cent, to Rs 1,59,822 per 10g in a business turnover of 7,515 lots. In the international market, gold futures on the Comex advanced USD 96.61, or 1.9 per cent, to USD 5,177.51 per ounce. According to Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at Indusind Securities, gold climbed in the international market, as renewed tariff worries prompted a rush to safe-haven assets. On Saturday, US President Donald Trump announced plans to raise global tariffs from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, following the US Supreme Court's rejection of his "reciprocal tariffs". —*PTI*

## Rupee rises 7P to close at 90.87 against USD

MUMBAI, 23 FEB

The rupee gained 7 paise to settle at 90.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, aided by a sharp fall in global crude oil prices and a weaker greenback amid renewed global trade-related uncertainties. However, foreign fund outflows, coupled with geopolitical concerns, capped gains for the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.76 and traded in the range of 90.67-90.89 against the greenback during the session. It eventually settled at 90.87 (provisional), up 7 paise from its previous close. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.32 per cent at 97.47. — *PTI*

## Kerala signs ₹2,000 cr MoUs for Vizhinjam seaport

T'PURAM, 23 FEB

The Kerala government on Monday signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with three central public sector companies to roll out a Rs 2,000 crore logistics master plan at the Vizhinjam International Seaport. The agreements were executed in the presence of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. This initiative will prevent monopolisation in cargo handling, guarantee fair pricing for traders, and safeguard national maritime interests. Under the plan, Indian Oil Corporation Ltd will set up large-scale bunkering facilities worth Rs 700 crore to fuel the mother ships calling at Vizhinjam. The Container Corporation of India will build rail-linked infrastructure worth Rs 600 crore and the Central Warehousing Corporation will develop a multimodal logistics park at Rs 700 crore. —*PTI*

## UP CM signs MoUs worth Rs 6,650 cr in Singapore

SINGAPORE/LUCKNOW, 23 FEB

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on his first day in Singapore, signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 6,650 crore with Universal Success Group. The agreements focus on investments in group housing, a logistics park, and a hyperscale data centre in the state, with the projects expected to generate over 20,000 jobs and bolster industrial and urban infrastructure. The first MoU involves developing an international theme-based township on 100 acres near Jewar International Airport, with Rs 3,500 crore investment, creating 12,000 jobs. The second is to a Rs 650 crore logistics park on 50 acres along Kanpur-Lucknow Highway, creating 7,500 jobs. The third is a Rs 2,500 crore hyperscale data centre park on 10 acres in Noida/Greater Noida, creating 1,500 jobs. —*PTI*

# Markets gain as investors cheer US SC's tariff verdict

### Sensex climbs 479.95 pts, while Nifty advances 141.75 pts

MUMBAI, 23 FEB

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher on Monday, tracking gains in PSU bank, auto and financial stocks, as investors' sentiments improved after the US Supreme Court struck down the Trump administration's sweeping tariffs.

Extending its winning streak for a second consecutive session, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 479.95 points, or 0.58 per cent, to settle at 83,294.66. During the session, the benchmark jumped 671.44 points, or 0.81 per cent, to hit an intraday high of 83,486.15.

A total of 2,435 stocks declined, while 1,894 advanced and 168 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty advanced 141.75 points, or 0.55 per cent, to close at 25,713. In the intraday session, it appreciated 200.2 points, or 0.78 per cent, to hit a high of 25,771.45.

Adani Ports was the biggest gainer from the Sensex pack, rising 2.98 per cent, followed by Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, PowerGrid, Hindustan Unilever, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro were the major gainers.

On the other hand, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Trent, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finserv, Tata Consultancy Services, ITC, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Eternal, Tata Steel, and IndiGo ended in losses.

The broader indices ended on a mixed note, with the BSE Smallcap Select Index gaining 0.41 per cent, while the Midcap Select Index declined 1.56 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices, PSU Bank increased the most by 1.4 per cent, followed by Services by 0.97 per cent, Hospitals by 0.89 per cent, Healthcare by 0.76 per cent, Power by 0.72 per cent, Auto by 0.71 per cent, Financial Services by 0.65 per cent, FMCG by 0.54 per cent, and Utilities by 0.52 per cent.

Information Technology, Focussed IT, Commodities, Private Banks Index, Bankex, Consumer Durables, Metal, and Realty ended in the negative territory. —*PTI*

# ₹590 cr fraud: IDFC First Bank's stock tumbles 20%

NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI, 23 FEB

Shares of IDFC First Bank tumbled 20 per cent on Monday after the private sector lender disclosed a Rs 590 crore fraud committed by its employees and others in accounts held by the Haryana government.

The stock nosedived 19.99 per cent to Rs 66.85 — also its lower circuit limit — on the BSE. The move came after the Haryana government de-empanelled AU Small Finance Bank, along with IDFC First Bank, from undertaking any government business over alleged fraudulent opening of accounts.

In addition, shares of AU Small Finance Bank plunged 7.62 per cent to hit an intra-day low of Rs 950.50 apiece on the exchange. Meanwhile, IDFC Bank Managing Director and Chief Executive V Vaidyanathan on Monday said fraud is the result of a collusion between employees of the IDFC Bank and external parties.

In a specially convened call for investors and analysts ahead of the opening of the equity markets, Vaidyanathan said the bank will take some provisions as a result of the fraud and in line with its policies to recognise any stress upfront.

However, the same is unlikely to have a major impact on profits, he said, pointing out that wider net interest margins and credit costs will be of help. The Haryana government has de-empanelled IDFC First Bank and AU Small Finance Bank for government business after IDFC Bank disclosed Rs 590-cr fraud in Haryana government accounts. Simultaneously, Governor Sanjay Malhotra said that RBI is watching the development around the IDFC First Bank's fraud, and there is no systemic issue. —*PTI*

## AU Small Finance Bank denies fraud claims

NEW DELHI, 23 FEB

AU Small Finance Bank has denied any wrongdoing in the alleged fraudulent opening of accounts after Haryana de-empanelled it from undertaking any government business. AU Small Finance Bank said the accounts in question were opened after completing all necessary KYC checks and authorisations. AU Small Finance Bank, in a filing late on Sunday evening, said the government account in question was opened with an initial credit of Rs 25 crore transferred from a large private sector bank and additional credits of Rs 47 crore were subsequently received through multiple transactions from another private sector bank (IDFC First Bank). Of the total credits received in the government account, Rs 47 crore were transferred to the customer account through 14 transactions, it said. —*PTI*

**'FOCUS ON CORE BIZ'**

## Mis-selling financial products an offence under BNS: FM

NEW DELHI, 23 FEB

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday came down heavily on banks for mis-selling of financial products, including insurance, to customers and asked them to focus on their core business instead.

She said it an offence under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

"Banks should concentrate on their core business...My pet peeve has always been...you are spending more time on selling insurance when it is not required, and conveniently, it fell between two stools (of the RBI and Irdai)," Sitharaman told reporters after her customary post-Budget address to the Central Board of the RBI.

On 11 February, the RBI had issued draft guidelines on mis-selling, saying banks will have to refund the entire amount paid by the customer for the purchase of the product or service and also compensate the customer for any loss arising due to mis-selling as per an approved policy.

The public has been given time until March 4 to give feedback.

The stricter norms on mis-selling will come into effect from 1 July, the RBI had said. Stating that banks were asking customers to buy insurance products even though they already had their required insurance, Sitharaman said the RBI did not monitor such mis-selling, thinking that it fell under the domain of the insurance regulator.

Irdai, on the other hand, felt banks are not regulated by the insurance regulator, and customers suffered due to regulatory gaps. —*PTI*

## US INSURANCE MAJOR OPENS TECH CENTRE IN HYD

HYDERABAD, 23 FEB

Telangana IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu on Monday inaugurated the Global Technology Centre of The Hartford here, marking the US insurance major foray into India.

The 160,000 sq ft. facility is located in Financial District in the city's IT hub.

The centre is expected to scale to a headcount of nearly 1,200 over the next few years as it expands advanced digital, engineering and AI-led capabilities for the organisation globally.

The facility will support the company's enterprise-wide technology transformation journey, with a strong focus on artificial intelligence, digital innovation and engineering excellence, it said.

Operating in a start-up-like environment, the centre is designed for "rapid prototyping and seamless cross–time-zone collaboration with the company's technology hubs in Hartford, Charlotte, Chicago, and Columbus in the US.

"By building on our world-class workforce with this technology center in Hyderabad, we are not only creating new digital and AI capabilities but also shaping the future of insurance technology," Shekar Pannala, chief information officer of The Hartford said. —*PTI*

## DAY-2: GAUDIUM IVF'S IPO FULLY SUBSCRIBED

NEW DELHI, 23 FEB

The initial public offering (IPO) of fertility services provider Gaudium IVF and Women Health got fully subscribed on the second day of share sale on Monday.

The company's IPO received bids for 2,85,63,948 shares against 1,46,20,340 shares on offer, translating into a 1.95 times subscription, as per data available with the NSE till 12:30 hours.

Retail individual investors part received 2.81 times subscription, while non- institutional investors subscribed 2.56 times.

Meanwhile, the portion for qualified institutional buyers received only 1 per cent subscription.

The company fixed the price band at Rs 75-79 per share, valuing the company at Rs 575 crore.

The proposed offering comprises a fresh issue of 1.14 crore equity shares and a sale of 95 lakh equity shares by promoter Manika Khanna.

Proceeds from the fresh issue are intended to establish 19 new IVF centres across India, along with payment of debt and for general corporate purposes. —*PTI*

## Bombay HC quashes stay on Anil Ambani fraud case

MUMBAI, 23 FEB

The Bombay High Court has a single-bench interim order that had stayed proceedings against industrialist Anil Ambani and Reliance Communications Ltd to classify their bank accounts as fraud. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad allowed appeals by three public sector banks and auditor firm BDO India LLP against the December 2025 order. The bench termed the single bench ruling "illegal and perverse". Ambani's lawyers requested the HC to stay its order to enable them to approach the Supreme Court, but the request was denied.

The banks challenged the December 2025 interim relief granted to Ambani, which had cited violations of RBI rules and described the banks' actions as "waking up from deep slumber" after years.

The single bench order had stayed all action by Indian Overseas Bank, IDBI Bank, and Bank of Baroda, citing flaws in the forensic audit and RBI guidelines. He had challenged show-cause notices issued by the banks, seeking to declare his accounts as fraud and requesting a stay, claiming BDO LLP was not qualified for audit. —*PTI*

## Airtel plans mega NBFC plant

NEW DELHI, 23 FEB

Bharti Airtel on Monday outlined major plans for its Non-Banking Financial Company, Airtel Money, and said the NBFC subsidiary will be capitalised with Rs 20,000 crore over the next few years.

Airtel will contribute 70 per cent with the promoter group via Bharti Enterprises bringing in the balance 30 per cent. Airtel Money received its NBFC licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 13 February, 2026.

Airtel has built a credit engine over the last two years, powered by its digital platform and deeply integrated channels, "resulting in one of India's strongest lending service provider models". —*PTI*

## RBI to auction ₹44,500 cr State Govt Securities on 24 February

NEW DELHI, 23 FEB

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct an auction of State Government Securities (SGS) on 24 February, amounting to Rs 44,550 crore, as per an official notification. Sixteen states—Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal—will raise funds through a combination of fresh issuances and re-issues. The securities range from three to 28 years, reflecting varied borrowing strategies aligned with fiscal needs.

Some states are re-issuing existing securities, including Chhattisgarh (7.59 per cent SGS 2046), Haryana (7.77 per cent SGS 2045), Karnataka (7.25 per cent SGS 2033), Tamil Nadu (7.12 per cent SGS 2032 and 7.44 per cent SGS 2055), Uttar Pradesh (7.24 per cent SGS 2033 and 7.59 per cent SGS 2041), and West Bengal (7.74 per cent SGS 2048). Gujarat and Maharashtra have indicated additional borrowing via green-shoe options.

The auction will be on RBI's E-Kuber platform, with competitive bids accepted between 10.30am and 11.30am, and non-competitive bids from 10.30am to 11.00am. Up to 10 per cent of each stock's notified amount is reserved for non-competitive bids, subject to a 1 per cent cap per stock. Successful bidders must pay on 25 February, 2026. —*PTI*

## Govt exempts tailings recycling in existing mines

NEW DELHI, 23 FEB

In a major relief to the mining sector, the government has exempted recycling of tailings within existing mine leases from the requirement of fresh environmental clearance (EC), according to sources.

The move, aimed at promoting sustainable practices and reducing regulatory bottlenecks, will allow mining companies to process and reuse tailings -- the residual waste material from ore extraction -- without waiting for additional EC approvals, the sources told PTI.

Tailings recycling involves reprocessing mine waste to recover valuable minerals, water, or other resources, helping minimise environmental impact and optimise resource use.

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) Chief Operating Officer (COO) Kishor Kumar S welcomed the move and said this will help the industry to work freely.

Industry experts said earlier, even activities like tailing recycling within approved mine areas required separate EC, leading to delays.

The development comes at time when the country is

**SAYS JEFFERIES REPORTS**

## *AI to reshape IT biz; risks, slow growth flagged*

MUMBAI, 23 FEB

PHOTO: AI

Jefferies, in its latest report, has revised downward its earnings estimates for the IT sector, citing structural changes driven by artificial intelligence (AI), which may significantly alter the traditional business mix of IT companies.

According to the report, AI is expected to structurally shift IT companies' business mix towards consulting and implementation services while shrinking the share of managed services.

This transition could increase cyclicality in revenue growth and require changes in talent strategies and operating models, thereby adding new risks for IT firms.

It stated "AI may structurally change IT business mix towards consulting/implementation while shrinking managed services".

Jefferies noted that despite a 16 per cent fall in IT stocks year-to-date, the sector still offers higher downside risk than upside potential.

Reflecting these concerns, the brokerage said it has lowered its earnings per share (EPS) estimates for the sector by 1-4 per cent and expects earnings to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6 per cent over FY26-28.

The report highlighted that while IT firms will remain relevant, the nature of client engagements is expected to undergo a structural transformation.

\Companies are likely to see a higher share of advisory and implementation-related work, while application managed services, which currently contribute about 22-45 per cent of revenues, could face sharp revenue deflation. —*ANI*

# Karnataka hold all aces against gritty J&K

## J&K march to maiden Ranji Trophy final

**HUBBALLI, 23 FEB**

Karnataka's Shreyas Gopal, who has taken 46 wickets and made 442 runs at an average -PTI

Jammu and Kashmir's entry into their maiden Ranji Trophy final is a heartwarming tale of grit and passion, but to grab the title, the underdog side would need to pull off a giant-sized miracle against eight-time former champions Karnataka over the next five days, starting Tuesday.

The tag of favourites is attached to Karnataka not merely because of their rich legacy, but it is a well-earned one after a season in which they consistently rose above opponents, conditions and injuries to key players at various junctures.

Karnataka have dominated teams both at home and away after a stuttering start against Saurashtra at Rajkot, where they conceded a narrow first innings lead to lose points.

However, eternal nemesis Mumbai and tricky newcomers Uttarakhand were dealt with confidence and ease, indicating the growing belief within the side.

Central to that dominance has been the form of their star batters KL Rahul, Karun Nair, Devdutt Padikkal, and Ravichandran Smaran. Rahul (3 matches: 457 runs, Avg: 91.40), Karun (8 matches: 699 runs, Avg: 63.54), Devdutt (5 matches: 532 runs, Avg: 66.50), and Smaran (8 matches: 950 runs, Avg: 950) have fired on all cylinders through the season. It has helped Karnataka overcome a middling season from Mayank Agarwal, who eventually stepped away from captaincy as Devdutt took over the team's reins. To his credit, the left-hander has led well both with the bat and his tactically sharp mind. This strong batting unit, however, will meet its match here at the KSCA Stadium in a capable Jammu and Kashmir bowling attack, led by pacer Auqib Nabi. The team is at the biggest stage of India's domestic calendar for the first time since making its tournament debut 67 years ago.

J&K pacer Auqib Nabi -PTI

Nabi has taken 55 wickets this season and has been the go-to bowler for J&K this season. The status would not change on a pitch here that is expected to give some assistance to quick bowlers at least initially. However, limiting Karnataka's strength to their batting will be naive. They have a varied bowling attack led by India pacer Prasidh Krishna. The support cast of Vidwath Kaverappa, Vidyadhar Patil, Vysakh Vijaykumar, Shikhar Shetty and Mohsin Khan has done exceedingly well in various situations. But one man stands head and shoulders above the rest Shreyas Gopal. The leg-spinner has taken 46 wickets and made 442 runs at an average of 45 golden numbers for an all-rounder. Shreyas has lifted Karnataka from the brink on more than one occasion this season, and he will continue to be a key figure in the title clash as well. —PTI

## Miller talks about Proteas plan that nullified Varun

**AHMEDABAD, 23 FEB**

All it needed was a still mind, limited movement, and strong intent, said South African big-hitter David Miller as he opened up about how his team successfully nullified Indian mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy in their T20 World Cup Super Eight clash here.

South Africa defeated the defending champions by 76 runs here on Sunday after posting a formidable 187/7. The in-form Chakravarthy was expected to be India's trump card, but on a wicket that didn't offer much assistance, he went for 47 runs in his four overs, with both Miller (63 off 35 balls) and Dewald Brevis (45 off 29 balls) taking him to cleaners.

"I think it's just about really making sure that we were on it in terms of if he bowls a bad ball, we got to put it away - so a little bit more intent and it wasn't spinning too much tonight, so you can kind of trust the line," Miller told reporters after the match.

"And once we felt that, then we felt, OK, we've got to take him down, because he is a threat to every team that he does play against. This was the first big knock of the tournament for the 36-year-old and was dotted with seven fours and three maximums. —PTI

SPINNERS IN FOCUS

## Pakistan eye crucial Super Eights points

**PALLEKELE, 23 FEB**

On a surface expected to assist slow bowlers, both England and Pakistan will lean heavily on their spin resources in their Super Eights clash in the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday.

England may not have hit top gear yet, but the two-time champions have found ways to win.

They kicked off their Super Eights campaign with a commanding 51-run victory over Sri Lanka, a result that significantly boosted their net run rate and took them to the top of the standings.

Defending a modest total against Sri Lanka, England played according to the conditions perfectly. Their spinners did the bulk of the work along with pacer Jofra Archer, to trigger a dramatic Sri Lankan batting collapse.

The ever-reliable leg spinner Adil Rashid and left arm spinner Liam Dawson have combined well to get the wickets.

Meanwhile, Will Jacks has emerged as an unlikely match-winner. His off-spin has been handy, but it is his contributions with the bat, 39 against Nepal, 16 against Scotland, and 53 versus Italy, that have repeatedly bailed England out of trouble.

Opener Phil Salt returned to form with a match-winning knock against Sri Lanka, as he batted beyond the powerplay for the first time in the tournament.

However, Jos Buttler's form remains a concern. But the veteran batter has got the backing of his captain, Harry Brook, who himself is yet to find runs. England also holds the advantage of familiarity with the venue, having swept a three-match T20I series here 3-0 earlier this month and also winning the Super Eight game against Sri Lanka. The match starts at 7 pm IST. —PTI

Will Jacks -PTI

-PTI

## England to tour South Africa for three Tests, ODIs

**DUBAI, 23 FEB**

The England men's cricket team will tour South Africa for three Tests and as many One-Day International (ODI) matches from December 2026 to January 2027, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced on Monday. The Test series will get underway on 17 December at the Wanderers Stadium in Johannesburg before the traditional Boxing Day Test at SuperSport Park in Centurion. The iconic New Year's Test will take place at Newlands Cricket Ground in Cape Town. The first ODI will be played at Boland Park in Paarl, after which the final two matches of the series will be held at the Mangaung Oval in Bloemfontein.—PTI

J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha inaugurating 6th Khelo India Winter Games 2026 at Gulmarg on Monday -PTI

## KIWG: Army makes rousing start, HP, CRPF also win gold medals

**GULMARG, 23 FEB**

Army made an emphatic start to the Gulmarg leg of the Khelo India Winter Games, winning three of the five gold medals at stake here on Monday.

CRPF and Himachal Pradesh also finished among the gold medalists on the first day.

It was not a day for the favourites as veterans like Bhavani Thekkada Nanjunda of Karnataka and Aanchal Thakur of Himachal Pradesh were usurped by skiers who have been doing well in the national circuit.

Young Jiah Aryan, all of 17 and one of India's upcoming talents in Alpine skiing from Karnataka, won a bronze in her second Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG). Jiah lined up against seniors like Aanchal and Sandhya Thakur, who have represented India at the Asian Winter Games in Harbin, China, last February. Himachal Pradesh's Sandhya beat Aanchal in a tight race on the Kongdoori slopes.

It was an emotional day for CRPF's Kajal Kumari Rai, who won the gold in the 15km Nordic skiing (cross-country) for women at the Gulmarg Golf Course. Kajal relegated hot-favourite Bhavani to the bronze in a brilliant finish. —PTI

T20I SERIES

## India Women eye another triumph over Australia

**BRISBANE, 23 FEB**

Having secured a stunning T20I series triumph, reigning world champions India will have the psychological edge when they take on Australia in the first women's ODI of a three-match series here on Tuesday.

India had beaten Australia in the World Cup semifinal last year in Navi Mumbai, and the hosts would be looking to avenge that stunning defeat.

What makes the series even more significant is the fact that one of Australia's greatest players, Alyssa Healy, will be making her swansong ODI appearance in this rubber. She will be ending her illustrious career after the one-off Test against India starting on March 6 in Perth.

Healy will return to lead Australia after missing the three-match T20I series, which India clinched 2-1 after winning the decider by 17 runs in Adelaide on Saturday. It was Australia's first bilateral series defeat since 2017.

Star leg-spinner Alana King is also coming to the ODI and Test sides after being overlooked for the T20 series.

Star opener Smriti Mandhana is expected continue to be India's batting mainstay after her match-winning 82 in the third T20I.

"Beating Australia in Australia is something really special. We will move on to the ODI series. We are on the verge of a transition where we want to dominate world cricket."And whoever we beat, wherever we beat, that doesn't matter.

We just want to be consistent in beating them and being at the top," Mandhana had said.India is currently leading 4-2 after the 2-1 T20I series win. Match starts at 9.20am IST. —PTI

-X/@SERENA

## Serena Williams will come back: Former coach Macci

**PARIS, 23 FEB**

Serena Williams' former coach, Rick Macci, believes the 23-time Grand Slam champion is certain to return to competitive tennis and said the 44-year-old is "going all out" in training to get herself ready for a return to the sport.Serena, who won her last Grand Slam singles title in 2017 and has not competed since the 2022 U.S. Open, can officially enter tournaments after rejoining the tennis anti-doping testing pool last year.The American has denied that she is preparing to return to the sport she dominated for two decades, but raised eyebrows last month by deflecting questions about a comeback during an appearance on NBC's Today Show.Macci, who previously coached Serena and her sister Venus in the early 1990s, told French publication L'Equipe that he believed she is preparing for a comeback.—PTI

## Abhinav Bindra's tenure ends

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**



Indian shooting legend Abhinav Bindra on Monday announced the end of his eight-year tenure as vice chair of the International Olympic Committee's athletes commission, describing his stint as one of the most meaningful chapters of his sporting journey.

The 43-year-old Bindra, who became India's first individual Olympic gold-medallist in the 2008 Beijing Games, has been replaced by Kenyan rugby player Humphrey Kayange in the panel that was rejigged at the ongoing Winter Olympics in Italy. "Serving athletes from across the world has been one of the most meaningful chapters of my journey in sport. To be entrusted with their voices, their concerns, their hopes and their dreams is a responsibility I have never taken lightly. —PTI

## IGPL secures USD 100 million franchise commitment

**NEW DELHI, 23 FEB**

The Indian Golf Premier League on Monday announced a USD 100 million capital commitment from 10 franchise partners across the country, with each investor pledging approximately USD 10 million over 10 years, signalling a long-term push to professionalise and expand the sport.

The IGPL staged its inaugural pro tour last year, comprising 11 events played in a 54-hole, mixed-gender, no-cut format with a prize purse of Rs 1.5 crore per tournament. The tour included events in India, Dubai and Colombo.

The body had announced plans for a city-based franchise league, initially slated for a January-February window. While the event did not materialise as scheduled, IGPL on Monday confirmed the franchise ownership details for the upcoming edition. The franchise rights have been awarded to Hyderabad (Phoenix), Mumbai (Atri), Kolkata (Flyingman Academy), Delhi (RVR Infra), Chennai (Vimtra Ventures), Visakhapatnam (Green Fuels), Goa (Auro Realty), Bengaluru (GolfKonnekt), Punjab (Krishna Auto) and Gurugram (Honer Homes Consortium).

"This is not a traditional sports investment, it's a strategic platform for business amplification and nation-building through sports," Uttam Singh Mundy, CEO, IGPL, said in a release. —PTI



AFTER WINTER GAMES SUCCESS

## *Italy is thinking of bidding for 2040 Summer Olympics*

**CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, 23 FEB**

After the just-concluded 2026 Winter Olympics have been hailed for setting "a new, very high standard" by IOC President Kirsty Coventry, Italian organisers are contemplating a bid for the 2040 Summer Games.

"I think our country deserves another Summer Olympics," Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) president Luciano Buonfiglio said over the weekend. "But let's take it step by step. A candidacy has to be agreed on and shared with the government." The idea of the Milan Cortina Games was born out of the rejection of Rome's bid for the 2024 Olympics by then-Mayor Virginia Raggi a decade ago. That came four years after then-Premier Mario Monti scrapped the city's candidacy for the 2020 Games because of financial concerns and after a Rome bid was narrowly defeated by Athens in the final round of voting for 2004.



IOC President Kirsty Coventry and Italian organisers are contemplating a bid for the 2040 Summer Games -PTI

"Scars help you remember" the defeats, said Giovanni Malago, the head of the Milan Cortina organising committee and former CONI president. But Malago, who is also an IOC member, suggested that Rome has a couple of key advantages in Olympic circles: its "unique" history of failed bids and the centrepiece venue for any Summer candidacy. "Rome has a 70,000-seat stadium with an athletics track, which is huge in terms of sustainability," he said. —PTI

## Eze hurts Tottenham, Liverpool grabs late winner

**LONDON, 23 FEB**

Eberechi Eze reignited Arsenal's Premier League title ambitions by being the scourge of Tottenham once again.

Three months after scoring a hat trick against Spurs, the England midfielder netted two more goals against Arsenal's fiercest rival, helping England win 4-1 away on Sunday. Viktor Gyokeres also scored twice for the leaders.



After having an 89th-minute goal disallowed following a VAR check, the Argentina midfielder scored again in the seventh minute of stoppage time and this time it survived a video review to earn Liverpool a 1-0 victory at Nottingham Forest.

Arsenal has 10 league games remaining in its bid for a first top-flight title since 2004. Eze came close to joining Tottenham in the summer, only for Arsenal his boyhood club to swoop in and sign him instead for a reported 60 million pounds ($80 million).—PTI